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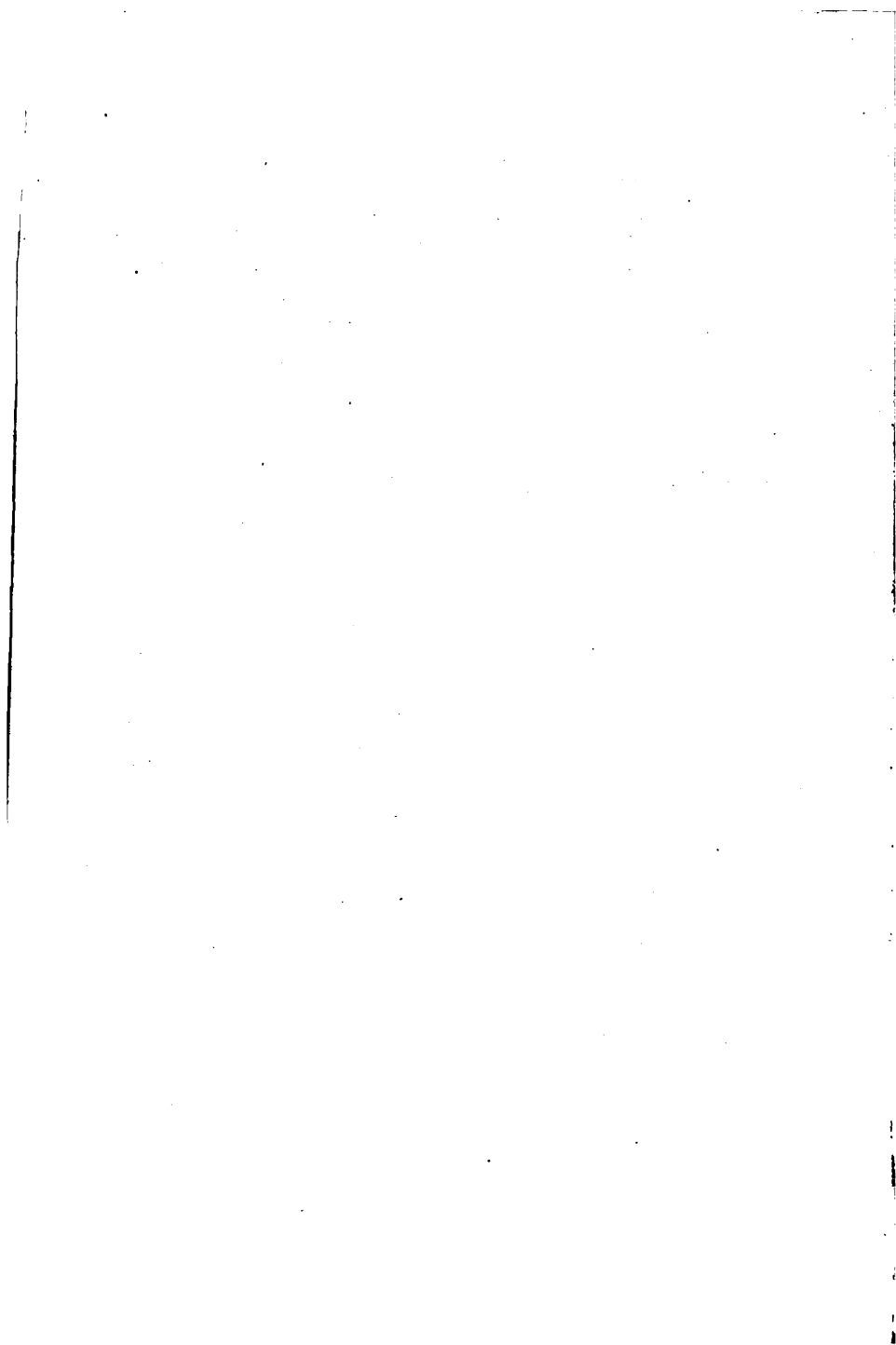
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THE VISION AT THE SAVOY

THE VISION AT THE SAVOY

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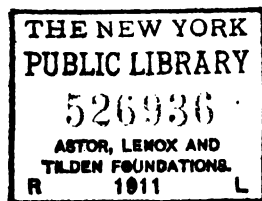
WINIFRED GRAHAM Cory.

*Author of "Wickedness in High Places," "Mayfair,"
"Angels and Devil and Man," "A Child
at the Helm," etc., etc.*



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THE VISION AT THE SAVOY

CHAPTER I

"THE wicked Aunt! That's what they call me," said Jane, arranging her curls in a glass above the mantelpiece.

She was obliged to stand on tiptoe, despite the height of her heels. She was not tall, but slight, picturesque, and wonderfully fair. Her little head, defying the prophecy of hair-dressers, retained at two and twenty its flaxen baby shade.

"Why wicked?"

She glanced at the man with her innocent smile, veiling so much which was subtle in her nature, as she replied—

"All nice things are wicked, and I'm nice! I am openly frivolous! My married sister is so much older, and—well—so much married. She has responsibilities. You know the sort of person with responsibilities."

Jane shrugged her shoulders, and laughed with girlish abandon. Her laugh, like her smile, was a shield, and disarmed criticism. Her lack

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of self-consciousness put the stranger at his ease. They had just met for the first time.

"I've been out in the wind," continued Jane, "and the demon god demanded all sorts of sacrifices. Look at my hair!"

' Harold Stone did look, with a long and unmistakably admiring gaze.

"My sister will be here directly, she sent me back in case any one came. When we started out she forgot it was her 'at home' day. I was to make heaps of apologies. Ethel is rather vague about social engagements. She's philanthropic, so people understand. It's written you cannot serve God and mammon, and I suppose that holds good—even in London."

Jane seated herself in a white satin rocking-chair. She looked such a dainty little figure, swathed in a voluminous chiffon scarf of tenderest mauve, and wearing a hat so light and airy, it seemed wonderful the boisterous wind spared it as a shelter to riotous curls.

The way of her hair suggested the Empire days, fantastic, and astonishingly attractive. There was nothing modern in its alluring character, which caused Jane Cardigan many a thoughtful hour, before finally deciding upon

a settled waywardness, by which to play the pretty deceit of apparent simplicity.

To men Jane appeared a delicate *bonne bouche*, an exquisite trick of nature, combining the purity of angels with the heritage of Eve. The fact that she was not all snow, but an emotional, warm-blooded woman, made startling appeals to the imagination of even her most slow-witted admirers.

They liked to think she was tender-hearted, and each built up his own Jane, without in the least knowing the real Jane.

"I've just placed you," she said, becoming suddenly interested in Mr. Stone. "I couldn't think where I had heard your name. Ethel was talking about you last night, she said you had done some wonderful mountaineering. It's so brave——"

"Or so foolish," broke in the man, with conviction. "I was persuaded by a friend to try the fascination. I have come to the conclusion I prefer looking up at a mountain from a village, to looking down at a village from a mountain. I had a feeling of reverence and immense respect for the heights, until I scaled their peaks. After that, I felt I had conquered them, they were never the same to me again."

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Jane listened with downcast eyes; it was impossible to guess what she was thinking, though the remark had evidently arrested her attention.

The man, seeing she made no reply, passed to another subject.

"I called," he said, "to enquire for your nephew. I was sorry to hear he had come home ill from school."

At the mention of the boy, Jane's quick, excitable manner became manifest, in direct opposition to the calm thoughtfulness of a moment since.

"Yes, Arthur is back—in the middle of the term. He has something wrong with his heart. I never met such an interesting boy. He's a companion, a real companion at fifteen. That's astonishing, isn't it?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so. It's rather a difficult age."

"I don't know what I should do if he died," she continued breathlessly. "He is the only person in the world I really care for. My parents are dead, and my sister has never approved of me. She tolerates me, that's all. But Arthur and I are pals. He never believes anything against 'the wicked Aunt.'"

Jane spoke with a recklessness which amazed

the stranger. He found himself suddenly admitted to her confidence without the smallest claim, and something in her manner conveyed such a sure sense of trust, that to repeat her frank confession would have been like breaking a sacred vow.

Jane had little discretion, but no man ever betrayed the faith she placed in him. Her nature made demands, she naturally accepted fidelity, and as naturally forgot to pay her debts.

Harold Stone wondered what further revelations it would have been his fortune to hear, had not Mrs. Paris returned at that moment full of elaborate excuses for her delay. It seemed of small moment to him why she was absent from her drawing-room when a self-established law held she should be "at home," yet of great moment to learn who Jane loved, or who merely tolerated this frivolous, irresponsible creature.

Fresh callers arrived, but Harold Stone lingered on. He asked many questions about Arthur, perhaps because it brought a look into Jane's face which was good to see.

"We are going away from London just at the commencement of the season," Mrs. Paris was saying to a friend.

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"The first I've heard of it!" remarked Jane in an undertone to Harold Stone, "and she's asked me here for a month. I have accepted simply heaps of invitations to dances, dinners, and that unhappy but inevitable function—the afternoon 'at home!'"

"Yes," continued Mrs. Paris, "my husband is quite resigned to going, as it is for our boy's health. We have a dear old place near Baynards, very hilly and bleak in the winter, but delightful at this time of year. The air will set Arthur up. I have asked some of my literary and artistic friends to come and stay, I find they are not so wedded to the season as non-workers. Artistic people appreciate Windycross; they like its queer corners, and the old oak. I prefer visitors who write or paint, they require so little entertaining, are contented with an ink-bottle and a view."

Jane leant forward, with her chin in her hands.

"I say, Ethel, I'm afraid the atmosphere will be too intellectual for me. I can't leave London just now."

Mrs. Paris looked defiantly at her younger sister.

"Really, Jane, considering you engaged yourself to stay with us for a month."

"In Mayfair, not on a windy hill, remember."

Jane's pretty face rippled with smiles; she was pretending not to notice Ethel's displeasure.

"I stay with people for the sake of their society, not merely for their environments," declared Mrs. Paris, distinctly ruffled at the girl's attitude.

"But think of my engagements in town! It would mean throwing over so many friends."

Lady Stewart, a soft-voiced woman, with heavy-lidded eyes, and a quantity of auburn hair, to whom Mrs. Paris had first broken her news of a contemplated flight to the country, evidently sympathized with the younger generation.

"It is awkward for Jane," she declared. "Of course, she has made her plans."

"And intends to hold to them," added Mrs. Paris, with a dreary shake of her head. "It means she will go to her Club with no chaperone save her maid, and do a round of parties like a young married woman. I call it disgraceful."

"Come to me," said Lady Stewart, addressing Jane. "I shall be ever so glad to have you."

The remark came so suddenly, that the girl who had no intention of accepting the invitation, was nonplussed for the moment.

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"You are very kind," she stammered, "but really I could not inflict myself upon you, and merely make a convenience of your house. I should have to be out morning, noon, and night. It would seem too rude! Sir Henry, you know, lives by rule: you told me so yourself. He likes punctuality for meals, and all that kind of thing. Let me come some time when I am not booked up."

Mrs. Paris looked hopeless.

"I don't know how we shall get on at Windy-cross without Jane. Mario, the artist, is only coming because I promised him she should sit in a sunbonnet for the chief figure in his new picture, 'Haymaking.'"

"Now, I ask," cried Jane, with mock indignation, "do I look a good type of a rustic?"

"And Arthur will be so disappointed," added Mrs. Paris peevishly.

She knew Arthur was a strong card, and wanting Jane's help with her house party, kept this final plea to the last.

"Oh! I don't think so," Jane answered, with just a touch of anxiety in her tone. "Boys find so much to amuse them in the country."

"I should like to see Arthur before I go," said

Lady Stewart. "He can tell me the latest news of my son."

"Of course. I forgot Jack was at Eton too," said Mrs. Paris, ringing the bell.

A few minutes later Arthur appeared, rather sorry for himself at being summoned to the drawing-room, which held so many strange faces.

He was a pale, clever-looking boy, with extraordinarily observant eyes, which he used rather restlessly. Better than sport or outdoor exercise, he loved listening to good music, or exploring museums.

Lady Stewart asked him many questions, which he answered in rather a quiet, reserved manner.

Later on he confided to Jane, "She wanted to know too much. After all, Jack was at school!"

The tone implied this fact demanded a certain freemasonry against telling tales.

So soon as he could conveniently escape Lady Stewart's catechism, he crossed to the window seat, where Jane was still talking to Mr. Stone.

The wicked Aunt flashed one of her splendid smiles at the silent schoolboy, and asked him to

fetch her some more tea. It was easy to see the little service gave him pleasure.

Jane did not drink the tea, but she whispered to Harold Stone :—" He likes doing things for me."

"I hear you are going to Windycross," said the man, merely as an opening to conversation.

"Yes, isn't it capital!" replied the boy, his glowing eyes fixed on his girlish aunt. "You are to go down on the motor car, Jane." (He had called her Jane since a baby.) "I asked Father if you might, as I knew you would prefer it to the train."

"Very good of you, dear," she answered, "but I must stay in town. Your Mother is rather angry with me about it. You see, it's an awkward time of year, I'm booked up."

Arthur's face fell. All the brightness and joy of life faded suddenly from his eyes, bringing a strange ill look to his features, which had not been visible before.

"Oh! too bad!" he muttered, under his breath.

It was not the stifled words, so much as the sudden expression of keen disappointment, which arrested Jane's attention. She saw the droop of

his mouth, the paling of his cheek, the fading of that brightness which had given charm to the boy's eyes.

She turned quickly, with a recklessness characteristic of her nature. She knew in a moment other things must go. She never paused to weigh them in the scales with her affection for her so-called "pal!"

"Oh! don't look so blue about it, Arthur," she said, laughing, and pulling his sleeve. "Of course I'm coming. I was only ragging you!"

Harold Stone listened in amazement, aware that personally he was left out in the cold, as this happy couple discussed plans, the boy eager and full of a joyful anticipation which defied bodily ills, the girl possibly acting the interest her attitude expressed.

Puzzled and a good deal impressed, he rose to go.

Lady Stewart was also saying some last words.

"I'll give you a lift, Harold," she said, as they passed down-stairs together. "It's delightful to see you back in London, and not looking a bit Colonial after your long absence."

He followed her silently, his mind full of strange bewildering thoughts. He had never

considered himself impressionable, but Jane, with her complex prettiness and enigmatical nature, captured all that was romantic and mystery-loving in Harold Stone's composition.

Lady Stewart looked half asleep as she stepped into her large red carriage. Her heavily-lidded eyes were lowered, and she seemed wrapt in contemplation. There was something sleepy, too, about the dappled grey horses, which a ribald critic had named "the stuffed dogs." They trotted slowly in the direction of the Park, driven by a coachman who appeared aggressively well fed.

"It's very sad, very sad," said Lady Stewart drowsily, shaking her head, in a manner which suggested her weight of hair made the action laborious.

"That I don't look Colonial?" suggested Harold Stone, blandly.

"Do not be silly! I was thinking of Jane."

He almost replied:—"So was I!" but succeeded in curbing any outward eagerness, and merely remarked he would like to know why the subject of Miss Cardigan made sorrowful reflection.

"Poor girl! She has been badly brought up,

and her wayward habits are a sore trial to her sister. Mrs. Paris is altogether a different sort of person."

"So I observed."

"Jane is the black sheep of the family, if one dare use such a term for a young girl! She has no consideration for any one, no respect for herself, no sense of the fitness of things. I invited her to my house, just to try her, to see if she would have the sense to know the difference between what is correct, and what is extraordinary. She had no wish to be hampered by my régime. I should have seen too much! She preferred the extraordinary. She is invited about like a married woman, to parties from which girls are carefully excluded, her life is an open revolt against the conventions. She lives for gaiety, revels in conquest, counts her scalps with gusto, and is welcomed everywhere on account of her great wealth."

"Her great wealth!"

"Certainly. Did you not know she had inherited an independent fortune?"

"I met Miss Cardigan for the first time to-day. I am not intimate with Mrs. Paris. I came across her at the house of a mutual

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friend, and she asked me to call. I knew her husband years ago. I heard from him their boy was invalided home. I went to-day to enquire. The pretty sister received me, I thought her very charming and original."

"Of course, all men do. I am only warning you. She isn't worth a thought from a good man like you. I don't want to take away the girl's character, but she is superficial, and feather-brained, and has broken many hearts. At eighteen she started off to travel round the world with a whole retinue of servants, and two couriers. It was 'Miss Cardigan and suite' in the visitors' books at hotels, and 'sweet Miss Cardigan' to all the young fools who believed they were in love with her! One boy shot himself in Cairo. She says it was a case of sunstroke, but a despairing love letter to Jane was found in his pocket."

"Horrible!"

Harold Stone hardly knew as he made the ejaculation if it referred to the facts related, or to Lady Stewart's gleeful telling of them.

She quite woke up over the recitation, and her eyes were for once really wide open. Perhaps she considered she was saving a soul alive.

"The money," she continued, flattered by the evident interest displayed in her listener's manner, "was left to the girl by an old relative. He lived a miserly life, and was hated by every one but Jane, who, as a child, exercised a strange power over him. While he disliked even to see Ethel, he would send for her younger sister, and keep the small person hours in his study, playing with her, and listening to her quaint conversation. His pride in her became at last the ruling passion of his declining days. He gave her everything she wanted, and utterly spoilt her. If it were not for the fortune he left his little favourite, Jane Cardigan might be a better woman to-day. She wins love and makes slaves of people. I do not believe she has a single good impulse. Money has made her reckless. She thinks she can do as she pleases, and believes she has the world at her feet."

"Perhaps," thought Harold Stone, "she has!"

He said aloud :—

"I hope you misjudge her. So far as her nephew is concerned, she is capable of sacrifice. She makes fun of her own misdeeds, calls herself 'the wicked Aunt.' I think if you were

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to ask young Arthur Paris, he would give her a good character."

"Sacrifice!"

Lady Stewart laughed aloud. The mere word in connection with Jane caused her genuine merriment.

The man wondered if he should tell what he had heard, repeat the sudden change of plans made so quickly and willingly by the girl. Better perhaps Lady Stewart should find it out for herself, miss the bright face in festive gatherings, and learn from Mrs. Paris "the wicked Aunt" was safely at Windycross.

The interest he had felt from the first moment in Jane, increased rather than decreased, but he managed to change the subject, for he was not prepared to champion her, yet to hear her abused hurt him. Why did it hurt? Oh! foolish, sensitive heart of a rough Colonial!

Though Harold Stone had not lost his polish, he had gained in far away lands an added respect for women. He had seen them at their best, hard-working, sound, healthy, honest mothers of a stalwart race. Sons of the soil, daughters of the soil, striving to fulfill their mission, each as he or she understood it.

Wives, that were wives indeed, not mere fashion plates for the adornment of society. Men who had never worn frock coats, and never would, but under the coarse exterior, fine fibre, real flesh and blood, made living a noble task.

Grand characters, yes, Harold Stone realized it, as he looked with the eye of imagination across vast seas, to the land of labour and patient content, realized too, that shining above the vision of true life, Jane's little face in the frame of curls, sparkling, mischievous, dare-devil, eclipsed with a glow of passion all the women good and bad in the old world or the new. She had power, undoubted power, perhaps for evil (by her own tongue branded "wicked"), and the subtle influence of her so-called wickedness was to Harold Stone like the perfume of violets, the soft cooing of doves.

The dove's note in the spring, the first violet breathing its scented kiss, the bursting of tender buds, all held partnership with Jane's sunny smile.

At Windycross he pictured her like the wind, the demon god she abused, changeful, capricious, tormenting, invigorating! Hardly a woman,

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something more elusive and complex, an element, a part of nature, of natural things.

What must it feel like to be Jane? To know the delicious sweetness of possessing wit, power, beauty! To look in the glass and say, "All this is mine, mine!" The blue of the eye, the bloom and the softness, the alluring, almost maddening personality.

Harold Stone found himself suddenly a dreamer, with great wide visions stretching away into misty vistas of new-born hopes.

She was cruel, he would court her cruelty! She was base, heartless, unscrupulous; he would ask for all that baseness, all that heartless flirtatious desire for the conquest of mere man, the unscrupulous love of gain, aroused by the devotion her beauty inspired. For, to do him justice, he was not wholly a fool, this suddenly infatuated admirer of Jane Cardigan, he believed in reality no ill of her, preferring to trust his own instinct, rather than the scathing criticism of a woman friend.

"Sad," thought he, "that women friends, to women, are so often enemies, at least where society brands heart and soul with the acid of competition."

CHAPTER II

"JANE wants me to ask Mr. Stone here from Saturday to Monday," said Ethel Paris to her husband. "They appear to have corresponded ever since their first meeting in our drawing-room. It's extraordinary how that girl can see men for a few minutes, and make intimate friends of them. I should hardly have thought such a slight acquaintance would warrant letters every other day!"

"They started a controversy on some abstruse subject, which Jane knows nothing about," laughed Mr. Paris. "She likes to pretend to be learned at times. Harold Stone is a good fellow. Let him come."

"For that very reason I think we ought not to let him come," said Ethel, looking her husband straight in the face with one of her disconcertingly direct glances.

"What do you mean?"

"Why should we help him to his doom? Don't you know Jane well enough by this time? She is only leading him on for her own amusement. It's dull here in the country, she wants

diversion. Is it right to let her play cat and mouse with a man you say is a 'good fellow'?"

Mr. Paris looked discomfited. Like most of the stronger sex he was on the side of Jane, and preferred to think no ill of her.

"Surely," he said, "Stone can take care of himself. He must see what the girl is, a light-hearted child, nothing more. I fancy he has sense enough not to take her seriously."

"A pretty independent child!" sneered Mrs. Paris. "Really, Percy, you talk like a fool. If Jane has a young face and manner, you know she's got the head of a woman of sixty on her shoulders. She is clever enough to know what she wants, and to get it. She wants admiration, and goes for it, without a scruple. She can't be happy unless some man is dying for love of her."

"But they don't die, my dear."

"What about poor young ——"

"I thought we agreed never to mention his name," interrupted Percy Paris quickly. "It was a case of insanity, caused by sunstroke."

"I do not believe that, and I never shall! The sunstroke was invented by a doctor at Cairo, in order to spare Jane's feelings. The doctor, you must remember, was a man; he would be on

Jane's side. The horror of that tragedy is always in my mind. It seems to follow Jane like a shadow. I think of it often when I see her laughing, and frittering away her time with infatuated men. Such a lesson, to slip by unheeded! What can one hope of such a girl?"

"You mustn't dwell on these things, Ethel. Can't you take Jane as she is, and let the past bury its dead. The girl may have follies, but she has also many uses. She makes the place bright, she's sunshine everywhere, in the dullest surroundings, on the dullest day. We should have nothing to talk about in the country if our brilliant little Jane didn't scandalize us at every turn. Why, you know, it's a perfect entertainment to you in the morning before she appears at breakfast, studying her letters, and wondering who on earth will write to her next! Jane's telegrams, Jane's motoring visitors, all enliven Windycross. Then look at our boy. She's making him enjoy every moment of the day!"

"Well, yes, they are companions. I must admit she is good to Arthur. He would have been wretched without her. She makes up for the absence of his school fellows, keeps him in capital spirits, and shares with him the open-air cure. I

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simply could not be out all day, it would tire me to death. Jane certainly has splendid vitality."

"In return, if she wants Harold Stone, I really think, Ethel, we might risk his coming from Saturday to Monday!"

Percy spoke with a whimsical expression, which gave him the look of a low comedian. It was a way of his Ethel particularly disliked. The oldest blood in England ran in his veins, yet she could never quite rid herself of the suspicion that nature intended him for a clown.

He liked to turn serious subjects to jest, revelled in playing practical jokes, and found his humour sadly damped by a wife who could hardly smile at the wit of a "Jerrold."

"Harold Stone is your friend," she said. "The matter rests entirely with you, Percy."

Having delivered this dignified remark, Mrs. Paris closed the subject, leaving her husband uncertain how to act, anxious to please every one, but convinced of his own incapacity to do the right thing.

"I'm sure to make a muddle of it," he said to himself. "The best way will be to sound Jane."

He was standing by an open window, which commanded a typical English view, fields ripen-

ing with corn, fields green, undulating, and again fields, fields! Far beyond, like the distant land of promise, the Brighton Downs wafted sea breezes to drowsy homesteads, telling of a hidden town, on the south coast, where trippers bathed, and "cheap fares" made merry from Pier to Devil's Dyke.

Below, in the garden, a girl was singing an Eton boating song at the top of her voice, and the top of Jane's voice was just the sweetest thing in the world. It was shrilly musical, like the thrush's note, wild and spontaneous, making no effort after effect, and charming unconsciously by its very lack of intention to charm. Arthur whistled as she sang, together aunt and nephew created a goodly concert.

An old gardener, leaning on a spade, listened intently. When they ceased, he ventured to clap his hands.

"Like it?" queried Jane.

Kitchen nodded an approving head.

"That's what I call singing," he declared.

"Well, I should hope so," laughed "the wicked Aunt," with a sidelong glance at Arthur. "We trusted it was not like caterwauling."

"Kitchen sings," said the boy.

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"Oh, do you?" cried Jane, turning one of her radiant smiles upon the bent white-haired man, who reminded her so forcibly of the twisted gnarled trees in the old-world garden.

"I've done with it this many a year, Miss, since I was took with a quinsy. The folks were real sorry when I gived up. They always asked for the same song, come Christmas time, 'Blue-h'eyed Nellie.' "

"Was it a serious subject?" asked Jane.

"Well, Miss, to tell truth, I was never quite sure on that point. Some would cry, and some would laugh. 'Blue-h'eyed Nellie' came to a sad end in the song, but at times it caused a deal of merriment. I was always h'encored. I just used to shut my eyes, and open my mouth wide, and get rid of it straight off my chest. At one time I was in the choir, just for a Sunday or two, but my voice was too strong for a small church, more suited, Parson said, to a cathedral."

"Oh! I see, you were wasted in a little country place," said Jane, very gravely.

"I've often thought the same, Miss, but my theory is—stay where you're born. If all the folks would do that, there wouldn't be the hustle, and bustle, and worry there is. I was born way

down there at the foot of the hill, and my mother, she said to me, 'Stick to the soil, lad, and the soil will stick to you!'"

He brushed some earth off his trousers, and set to digging again with a will.

Jane stood watching his labours with a smile.

"The smell of the earth is so good," she said, "it makes one think healthy things."

"Does it indeed?" (an arm was put through hers).

"Oh! Percy, how you startled me!"

"Come for a stroll, I want to talk to you alone."

"When relations want to talk to you alone, it always means something disagreeable."

Percy sighed. It seemed to him for the moment there was truth in her words.

"It's about Harold Stone. Ethel says you want us to invite him here."

"Only from Saturday to Monday. He is so tired of town."

"Yes, but Ethel thinks ——

"That I am going to flirt with him, and it's all very wrong and disgraceful. She made me sit for an hour and a half every day last week to Mario, the artist, quite oblivious of the fact he was making love to me all the time. The 'hay-making' picture gave me a perfectly atrocious

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profile, I really nearly married him out of revenge! He calls it the success of his life, the success of ugliness. The hay was so natural that people with hay fever sneezed when they looked at it. The setting sun was supposed to bathe my figure in a ruddy glow, but the glow seemed chiefly to catch the tip of my unfortunate nose. 'Sunburn,' he explained. 'Glorious! If you would only get sunburnt you could be divine.'"

Jane pulled her shady hat further over her eyes, and fluttered a powder puff in a small lace-edged handkerchief.

"I was made for town," she added, "I am just a sham in the country."

"But we are straying from the subject of Harold Stone," mildly suggested Percy.

"And the lecture. Oh! yes, please go on, my dear, conscientious, moral policeman."

She pressed his arm in a friendly manner.

"Are you in love with the man?"

The question came bluntly. It was impossible to believe at that moment Percy Paris ever played clown's tricks. He spoke with a certain vehemence new to him.

"What man?"

"Oh! you know. Don't prevaricate, Jane."

The girl looked down, the corners of her lips twitching, and making a tiny dimple.

"Well, I must say, Mario has points, and if he were only not such a butterfly ——"

"I'm talking of Harold Stone."

"Are you?"

"Yes. You knew perfectly well, but you did not want to answer me. He's an old friend of mine, I met him before I married. I think he's fond of you."

"Do you really? Then by all means let him come. He won't want entertaining. I'll just trot him out for walks, and Arthur shall make a third. Arthur is my salvation! We have a code of signals. One means, 'stick to me whatever happens.' Another, I am afraid, conveys, 'two's company, three's none.'"

"Jane, listen to me," (again the air of solemn resolution, so unlike Percy), "If Harold Stone asks you to be his wife, shall you accept him?"

"No."

The girl answered without hesitation. Her frivolous air had quite departed.

"I want him," she said, by way of explanation, "to reverence me. It's funny, isn't it? I've never had that feeling about a man before."

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"But surely a husband can reverence his wife."

Jane smiled rather sadly, as she replied—

"The first day I met him, we talked of mountaineering. He was known as a great climber in Switzerland. He loved the mountains until he conquered them, then his immense respect for the wonderful heights vanished, and they were never again the same to him. I remember the very words he used when describing his feelings: 'I prefer looking up at a mountain from a village, to looking down at a village from a mountain.' So, Percy, you see, I elect to remain the mountain, the thing of snow and mystery, of unattainable heights. I like my great lofty position; it gives me immense pleasure. I do not care to dwindle into an insignificant little village, for the conqueror to look down upon. All this may sound very silly to you. I've kept this feeling to myself, and rather gloried in it. You have dragged it from me, but I don't expect you to understand."

There was in Jane's manner a baffling simplicity, she spoke with candour and absolute conviction.

"I begin to think you are very clever," said Percy contemplatively. "Still, you can't deny

you are playing with the man, leading him on, as the cruel glacier tempts the traveller upwards, only that he may slip and lose himself in the horrible crevasse below."

"You think that?"

Jane drew a letter from her pocket.

"Read," she said, pointing to a paragraph.

Percy scanned the lines written in a masculine hand.

"At least consent to be my friend. If you can never feel anything deeper for me, don't deny a poor beggar the privilege of your friendship, give this much and I shall not quarrel with life. If, as you say, there is a chance your sister may ask me to Windycross, I promise by no word or deed to overstep the boundary line you have clearly marked out. You were an angel to write as you did, such kind words wrapping up a bitter truth. Let me come, let me come, as you are merciful, let me come!"

Jane snatched the letter from Percy.

"I ought not to have shown it," she whispered.

"It was to justify myself. I've played fair."

"He's better away," said her brother-in-law.

"I think," replied Jane, "you are a very hard man."

CHAPTER III

JANE wrote one of her hurried, spasmodic letters.

"DEAR MR. STONE,

"Ethel and Percy are so silly about asking any one here whom I like. I shouldn't stay a day if it were not for Arthur. I must see you before you go back to Australia (bother the property there!) Can't you stay in England and be my friend? Much better for you than burying yourself among sheep and things! I have decided to come to London for two days, and shall give a farewell dinner party, especially for you, if you will let me know when you are disengaged. I thought of asking about twenty people to the Carlton or Savoy. People say my Club is the most exclusive in London, but the food. . . . You might venture lunch with me there, as of course I couldn't be seen alone with you at a public restaurant. People would talk, and I should not like you to be talked about, it might worry your mother. Percy says I am madder than ever, and Ethel has had nothing but a series of shocks ever since I came to Windycross. To tell you the truth, I have been too good for words, but it's my own country, so, like the prophet, I cannot expect any honour! How very foolish of you to think of me so much, as you know I shall never, never marry. But I will show you I can be the best of friends, if you keep to your resolution, and if it doesn't hurt you to see me. I really worry about your happiness. You are so nice, too nice to be sighing for me. Shall you do any more mountain climbing, before you return to Australia? It's rather hard luck your having been holiday making for nearly a year, and that we should only just have met. Write to me again, but not nine sheets this time, it must be so bad for your eyes!"

Jane paused. Her pen had simply flown across the paper. In parts the hasty writing

was almost unintelligible, and she felt sure it was ungrammatical.

"Dear me," she murmured, "it was Mario who was suffering from his eyes! Never mind, Mr. Stone will think it a nice considerate remark. I am sure there's nothing in the letter to give him hope. He can't imagine I like him very much. He must know I write like that to every one. The world is so dull if you don't make much of people, and of course it inspires them to make much of you. I wouldn't give twopence for life without affection."

So saying she addressed an envelope to Harold Stone.

"I'll send all my dinner invitations by telegram, and pay the replies, when he fixes the date," she resolved. "Ethel will be so astonished at twenty telegrams arriving."

Jane made a list of probable names, bringing the guests up to thirty.

"Ten more won't make much difference," she said aloud.

"Ten more what?" asked Arthur.

He had come noiselessly into the room.

Jane considered a moment, then replied —

"Ten more years on to my life. I was think-

ing how absolutely irresistible I shall be at thirty-two."

"Jolly old!" remarked the boy.

"That's all you know about it. If I am old, I shall look as young as I do to-day, but I shall be ever so much more interesting. Oh! I am not conceited enough to believe there is no room for improvement. Time may be a woman's best friend, if she's clever enough to preserve her figure and complexion. I've a great respect for experience. From thirty to forty are the best years of a woman's life, after that she can drown herself."

Arthur listened with evident surprise, having the greatest faith in Jane's logic. She had such a convincing way. Whatever she said carried weight. Over the boy she exercised an influence as poignant, and lasting, as the power which made a hard old man worship at the shrine of a willful child.

It was Jane alone, who, in the days of short frocks, had the audacity to curl herself up on the miser's knee, and fall asleep with her head on his shoulder. Jane who christened him "Grisly," and kissed the grey of his beard, Jane who brought him her toys and her joys, that he might share the brightness of her young

life, Jane who demanded a seat in his bath chair, because she was lazy, and hated to walk.

"Jane," said the boy, "do you think my heart will stop me from growing old?"

Jane looked up quickly. He had not mentioned his health for weeks. As he stood before her in a ray of sunlight, he appeared so manly and handsome, so full of life and vigour, that the unexpected question filled her with a certain fearful resentment.

She clasped her hands, crushing the quill with which she had written, and set her firm white teeth.

"No," she replied, "you are a fraud. I can't think why they sent you back from Eton. The doctor said yesterday you were practically well. You have had no pain since you came to Windycross."

The boy laughed.

"All right," he said, "don't get angry about it."

"I should be very angry, if you didn't go on living for years and years! What would be the good of my having made you my special care ever since you were a tiresome creature in frocks, if I am not to enjoy your grateful solicitude in my senile decay? I have told you I shall never marry, so if you are good to your maiden-aunt, she will leave you all her inheritance.

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Arthur burst out laughing.

"My maiden-aunt," he said, his eyes dancing as they rested on the girl. "How funny you should be that, Jane!"

She joined in his merriment, adding a few flourishes to the "H" and the "S" of "Harold Stone."

"There is only one thing I am really afraid of," she said, "I am really afraid of falling in love. I want to keep on the top rail. A woman can't be her best self, when she is wrapt up body and soul in a person who may make her hideously jealous the very next minute. It's like living on a precipice, with a thousand hells at your feet, while the Heaven you think you are sharing may be a very flimsy affair after all. I, for one, should never believe in it."

This youthful, curly haired maid, spoke with the cynicism of a soured world-wise soul, as if indeed her memory reached back to some previous existence, in which her young heart had been laid in ruins by the hand of man.

Her attitude of mind would have delighted the theosophist in search of evidence. Might not her prejudice prove that in past centuries her ego had wedded with one whose infidelity

left upon her sentient personality an undying warning for future ages?

Arthur strolled to the window with his hands in his pockets. Jane watching him, was sure he had grown in the last few weeks, and felt a certain pride in his height.

"There's a motor car coming up the drive," he said.

"What colour?"

"White."

"Can you see the contents?"

The girl's voice held anxious enquiry, but she did not rise from her seat. There were visitors from whose society she fled as from the plague. Not all the friends beloved of Ethel and Percy were acceptable to Jane. She took strong likes and dislikes, which she never tried to curb. In the room above, absorbed in work, sat a celebrated woman writer penning atheistic essays, a woman whose very presence brought to the surface all that was evil in Jane.

"Two men," replied Arthur, "one is getting out now. Oh! of course I know him. It's Mr. Stone."

The wicked Aunt started to her feet. She kept the letter in her hand, and her cheeks grew pink.

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Instinctively she turned to a looking-glass, and twisted her curls, making them pose more demurely, while one favoured little tendril was permitted perfect freedom, to give the whole an air of not being carefully arranged.

Unfastening a ribbon from a Fuller's basket of chocolates, she twisted the dainty conceit deftly in her fanciful locks. She was dressed in a picture gown of muslin, and the glass gave back an image to which she vouchsafed a friendly little nod.

"You'll do!" she said, and ran singing out of the room.

She met Ethel on the landing.

"It is too bad of you," whispered her sister.

"You knew Percy and I did not want him."

"Mr. Stone has certainly not called at my invitation."

The reply came haughtily.

Jane stood back, that Ethel might pass down first.

For a moment the girl half resolved to return to her sitting-room, and remain in seclusion till the unwelcome guest had departed, but the idea was only momentary, and pleasure supplanted it, with strong appeals.

"Of course you can't help him coming,"

declared Arthur, who had overheard the short controversy.

Jane shook off her ruffled air, and followed Mrs. Paris, greeting the motorists enthusiastically.

"You could not have come at a better time," she said. "Arthur and I are nearly always out in the afternoon, but I had an important letter to write to-day, so you just caught us."

Harold Stone introduced his friend, explaining they wanted a run, and finding themselves near Baynards, thought they would see if they could find "Windycross."

"We can have tea in the garden, can't we, Ethel?" said Jane, as they strolled out to the verandah.

Mrs. Paris told Arthur to ask for it at once, hoping this might hasten the motorists' departure. She was not surprised that Harold Stone manifested a keen interest in the grounds, or to note Jane's quick sympathy with his desire to inspect certain shrubs, flowering in secluded byways.

"The professional flirt," as Ethel termed her sister, "would not have been likely to miss such an opportunity."

"My important letter," Jane confessed, "was to you," giving Mr. Stone the envelope with one

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of her amazingly brilliant smiles. "You had better read it, if you can decipher the horrid handwriting."

He devoured the lines with greedy eyes, which grudged the moments wasted from looking at her face. The strong man had grown paler since their first meeting and some of his easy self-assurance was lacking. His air, less reposeful, was at the same time less attractive, he looked worried, nervous, changed.

"I ought not to have come, if your sister didn't want me," he said. "But how could I tell! You gave me no hint in your previous letters, rather you conveyed I should be welcome."

"Why of course you are welcome, only don't you see, Ethel is so limited in her ideas, she can't understand our perfectly innocent friendship. She always thinks I am in the wrong, harming somebody, or doing something I ought not to do. She is like the small boy who said to his brother, 'Go and see what baby is doing, and tell her she mustn't.'"

"Perhaps," replied the man, "it is well I have to go back to Australia. This could not go on. I should become a nuisance to you, always imposing upon your kindness. Then you would

grow tired—even of friendship, think what that would mean to the forsaken friend !”

Jane looked enigmatical.

“You have a very poor opinion of my powers of endurance.”

“Perhaps I’ve a poorer opinion of my own self-control. I don’t fall in love every day, Miss Cardigan.”

“Don’t you? I wish you did! Then it would just be a game, an incident, and you would not be so terribly serious over it all.”

“There you see, I am boring you already.”

Jane shook her head, and Harold Stone longed to steal the little ribbon, which nestled so prettily among her curls. He couldn’t think of her as a heartless modern young woman, with advanced views, and an almost scandalous independence. She seemed to him to have just stepped out of a miniature, with simple old-world instincts in her heart, and a soul, young, pure, unsophisticated, shining through her eyes.

Had she laid her hand in his, and promised to go back with him to his sheep farms in Australia, he would hardly have felt surprised at that moment, so great is the governing influence of a strong personal desire.

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It was hard to remember she was just a society butterfly, and an heiress,—in love with her own freedom.

He whispered she was pretty, as if telling her a newly discovered fact, with the air of one convincing her against her own belief.

Jane listened with a slight parting of her lips, a drooping of her head, and the happy glow of sensation which genuine appreciation affords.

"You'll come to my dinner party? I shall drink your health, and tell my friends it is to wish you Godspeed, and safe return," said Jane sympathetically.

"If I may sit beside you," he replied, venturing to make a condition.

"On my right. You will be the guest of the evening, dear friend. When people go so far away, one must fête them a little, or they would carry back few happy memories. I shall call it my 'forget-me-not' dinner. All the decorations shall be blue, and the guests will be given forget-me-nots, and souvenirs."

As Jane unfolded her plans, she had a most intense desire to give pleasure to the man she was torturing.

So strangely is human nature constructed,

that she genuinely believed in her own kindness of disposition.

"When shall you return to England?" she added, showing a breathless interest in his future.

"Not for some years."

"Remember, and come back to me,—just to me," she urged. "Is that a bargain?"

He grasped her hand.

"If you care to see me."

"Of course I shall care. I am going to be a kind of mother to you."

"I am thirty-three," he said, with a smile,—
"and you,—but I think I know your age."

"Twenty-two."

"Yes, Lady Stewart told me."

"She had no right to divulge such a sacred secret. I might have been posing as a girl in her teens."

"In which case Lady Stewart would have been delighted to give you away."

"Oh! come, she is too sleepy to be vindictive," protested Jane.

"She woke up the day she drove me from your sister's house."

"I am not the least curious, I'd rather not hear what she said about me."

Jane felt very superior as she made this re-

mark, and inwardly burned with curiosity. Yet she had her own methods of probing for information, and liked to appear indifferent.

"She is really a very good friend of mine—that Lady Stewart. She thinks well of every one. I wouldn't mind confiding in her ——"

"Don't," he added quickly. "She—she doesn't approve of all you do,—she thinks you are too young to manage your own life, she implies that freedom and wealth are drawbacks to—to—people of your temperament. She grudges you your conquest of mankind."

Jane refrained a smile, and tried to look grave.

"Sometimes," she murmured, "I think people say disagreeable things just for the sake of talking, and they don't mean any harm at all. They are possibly poor conversationalists, and scandal is so easy. It instantly arrests attention, and needs no talent. Lady Stewart would never keep awake if she didn't occasionally pick her friends' characters to pieces."

Jane's mild tolerance increased Harold Stone's admiration of her, and the tea bell sounding at that moment seemed ringing his doom, hastening to a swift conclusion the few precious moments in her society.

She turned with a sigh, and he released her hand. The fact that he had held it so long demanded some explanation.

"You must forgive me," he said, "but it's such a little hand."

"Yes, too small to count," laughed Jane.

"When you speak of never marrying," he whispered, "do you really mean to keep all that sweetness to yourself, to die with your life-mission unfulfilled?"

Jane coloured slightly.

"Surely marriage is not a duty."

"For some people. Think what a wife you would make for a man! You have no parents, no obligations. You can't live to yourself always."

"Whom are you pleading for?" she asked.

"The man who is to be the happiest on earth."

"But where shall I find him? In the whirlwind? In the clouds? Perhaps on some distant continent. I love foreigners. I make Arthur furious by declaring I am sorry to be a Britisher. Proud as I really am of England, I dread lest she should hand me down her legacy of inherited dullness. I feel with the Frenchwoman who said, 'Nothing does so spoil society as the presence of an English lady!'"

They came in sight of a rose-covered arbour where tea was set.

Ethel Paris glanced reprovingly at Jane, whose face wore a halo of tenderness, like a newly-won bride.

Harold Stone's motoring friend seemed anxious to be going. He had other calls to pay on his way back, and his conversation with Mrs. Paris had not exhilarated him. She was in one of her lecturing moods, and discussed the "housing question" in crowded districts with so much scientific knowledge.

He began to wonder why on earth Stone made him come, but the memory of Jane's pretty face quickly gave the explanation.

"One of the best-hearted fellows in the world," he had said to Mrs. Paris, when mentioning Harold. "Wish he'd take a wife back to Australia with him. He is doing very well out there."

This remark had the effect of absolutely freezing Mrs. Paris. She became an iceberg, with her short, "Oh! really!"

But the tea went gaily, for Jane had much to say. She talked "motoring" to the stranger, and warmed him with her intelligence. She had learned that motorists were like mothers delighting in discuss-

ing their children, and the points and advantages of his special car met with her keen appreciation.

"An uncommonly clever girl," he said, as they drove away. "Seems to know her way about, too, travelled a lot."

"Been round the world," replied Harold.

"Ah! that enlarges the mind. You're a man of good taste, my boy!"

"What do you mean?"

"Those who run may read."

"That I am not in the running?"

"No, you mistake my meaning."

"It's a fact nevertheless. She has refused me."

"Sorry, old chap. Better luck next time. When are you off?"

"Next month. The sooner the better."

The motorist reflected. He began to hope he might happen to meet Miss Cardigan again. Of course he wouldn't try to cut Stone out, but if the girl had made up her mind ——

Thoughts flew rapidly, like the car.

"Undoubtedly the girl had given Stone no ray of hope, he was so confoundedly quiet."

"The prettiest face I've seen for many a long day," said the motorist presently, "and a mind behind it! You don't often find the two combined."

As the motor vanished down the hill, Jane ran quickly to her room, and somewhat viciously scratched Lady Stewart's name from the list she had made for her proposed dinner party.

"Pig to run me down!" she muttered. "Of course the idea was to put him off me right at the beginning. He's such a good friend, too, and understands me so well. I should have had a very dull afternoon without him to-day."

"There's no changing you, Jane," said Mrs. Paris, entering like an avenging angel. "You must needs take that poor man off for a prolonged *tête-à-tête*, when you could quite well have stayed with us. I tried to make Arthur follow you, but boylike he did not understand."

"I gave him the signal, 'two's company, three's none.' I could not disappoint poor Mr. Stone, when he had come all the way from London to get a word with me. I rather liked the other man at tea. I think I shall ask him to my dinner."

"What dinner?"

"Only a little party I am giving in town as a farewell to Mr. Stone before he leaves England. I hope you and Percy will come up for it. Don't look so black, Ethel. Can't you and I be friends?"

"Not while your conduct is so disgraceful and unwomanly."

"I think I am the best judge of my own conduct," said Jane.

The hands she had put out supplicatingly when asking "can't we be friends?" were hurriedly withdrawn, and the firm little fists clenched involuntarily, as her sister gave back the sharp retort.

"The most lenient judge certainly," replied Mrs. Paris, as she left the room.

To relieve her feelings when alone, Jane took off her shoe, and threw it at the door.

"I've given up everything—everything—in town," she said, "simply to stagnate here and amuse Arthur. I don't want her to be grateful, but after all, he's her boy, and I do think she's too down on the wicked Aunt. She even grudges me a walk round the shrubbery, as if men couldn't take care of themselves!"

But Ethel Paris was not there to hear the protesting words.

Slowly Jane replaced her shoe, and fell to eating chocolates from the unribboned Fuller's basket. They were sweet and comforting. Wired to the lid was a card of Mario's, and written across it: "To my Lady of the hay, from her devoted slave."

CHAPTER IV

PERCY decided to go to town with Jane, Ethel definitely declined. She did not particularly approve of the people her sister had invited. After Lady Stewart was removed from the list, the names had undergone some revising.

"Much better make it a really lively party," thought Jane, "to cheer up Mr. Stone. He likes young people."

So she only invited good dancers to her dinner, and provided tickets for a big subscription ball, taking place that night under distinguished patronage.

"We can go there about eleven o'clock," she told Percy, "just to wind up the evening. It is sure to be thoroughly well done, and we may as well dance in the cause of charity."

"Guinea tickets," said Percy, "you extravagant little girl."

"I must spend my money on something," replied Jane, as she scribbled a check in her quick erratic way. The signature was hardly readable, still they knew it at the bank.

When Percy escaped from his wife's influence,

all those clownish habits she so much disliked, came bubbling up to the surface.

He set himself to amuse Jane by a host of little follies Ethel would never have tolerated.

Jane always proved a sympathetic audience. She cared not in the least how conspicuous he made her, by the tricks and pastimes of a mirth-loving nature. She felt a little glad that Arthur had struck the happy medium between Ethel and Percy, and longed for the time when he would be old enough to accompany her to balls.

"I shall know the ropes by then, even better than I do now," she told herself, "and it won't be my fault if Arthur doesn't have a good time."

Meanwhile Percy was rather like a boy escaped from school.

The excellent dinner, the bright faces round him, Jane's tact and gaiety as a hostess, all made for merriment and unceremonious fun. There was something a little continental in Jane's manner of entertaining. Every ponderous element was chased away by her light banter, her infectious laugh, the quick, bright smiles which flashed across her face. She surrounded herself with natures like her own. She made the enjoyment of the moment the science of her life,

It flashed across Percy during the evening how deadly the routine of Windycross must appear to a girl of Jane's temperament.

"You really are stunning as a hostess," he told her, "you do make things go. I don't know when I've been at such a jolly dinner. You picked the right sort of people. I can't think why it is, but Ethel has a genius for attracting the stupid and dull."

He confided his opinions to Jane during the first valse, which she had graciously given him as a sign of special favour.

"It is just personal taste," replied his sister-in-law, lightly. "When I told Ethel who was coming, she declared I was in a very rapid set, and looked horrified when I remarked, 'anything was better than a slow set!' I really wonder she trusted you with me, Percy. I suppose she thought your presence made my party more respectable. Even Harold Stone woke up, didn't he? I kept him quite lively at dinner. He doesn't like leaving England, and is really making himself rather wretched over saying good-bye to all his friends."

"I think it's one friend in particular. The others don't trouble him," replied Percy.

"I hope he calls me his friend, I'm really only a new acquaintance. He won't mourn me for long. You see, I really haven't given him any encouragement, I was quite honest from the first. I told him I was 'the wicked Aunt' the moment we were introduced, which was particularly noble of me. I might have posed as such a good little thing."

"With all your vices, Jane, you're the best dancer in London."

"I wish," she said, "we could bring some of this element to Windycross. It wouldn't hurt Arthur's heart, and it might drive out the dowdy old authoress, and keep some of the local people from calling. That nice Sir William Lambdon, who brought Mr. Stone down the other day, says he is longing to come again. I did not catch his name that afternoon, but I wrote and asked Mr. Stone to bring him tonight. I simply called him 'your motoring friend.' Ethel said he bored her to death, so I simply dare not encourage the idea."

"Please don't, or I shall never hear the end of it," pleaded Percy.

They were seated on the stairs, looking down upon a line of well-dressed heads, white necks,

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and jewels. It struck Jane that in fashionably-dressed women, the crowning failure, the irredeemable blot, lay in sameness.

The music commenced, and a simultaneous rising gave a note of monotony to the evening's programme. But Jane was not prepared to quarrel with monotony, she only wished some surprise would strike the pulse of the hour, some sensation new and varied.

It was close upon twelve o'clock, but her party had only been present for one valse. The late comers attracted a good deal of attention, for Miss Cardigan brought in her train some of the prettiest and best known Society women. Jane never feared competition. She was too individual for the narrow range of jealousy.

Harold Stone claimed her for the next dance. He looked elated, there was nothing in his manner to-night to indicate the rejected lover.

Jane noted this with pleasure.

At the close of the valse she ventured to remind him they must make the most of the evening, as it would probably be their last together for many long years.

"The years are short for workers," he said, "and only long for butterflies. I hope" (with

a searching look into her eyes), "that you, sweet butterfly, may never know a winter."

It almost seemed he pitied her as he spoke, forgetting his own trouble. This new aspect of Harold Stone's puzzled Jane, as she replied —

"You are going back to your work, and you are not afraid the time will drag?"

"No. It's good to escape this useless life. I've been amusing myself for the last year, and it seems a century since I left the routine of my days and nights in Australia. There I lie down tired from toil, from hours in the fresh air, and sleep is welcomed. Here I am tired, but in a different way. I can't sleep, I'm haunted. Perhaps I shall escape from myself, when I return to the old routine."

"And from me?" whispered Jane. "I know you mean that."

He shook his head.

"I only pray," he said, "for memory to see your face always, as I see it now. Until to-night I've been angry, resentful, I've cursed fate and circumstance, I've almost cursed God."

He shuddered, and bent his head.

"Until to-night! What has made the difference, Harold?"

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She called him by his Christian name for the first time, but so naturally, it seemed the word came from long familiarity. Possibly she had thought of him as Harold, and merely spoke aloud what was in her mind.

"Percy Paris said something which comforted me, and changed my gloomy thoughts. He's the best of good fellows! You see, I told him, because—well—I gathered he knew from his manner, so the telling wasn't much compliment."

"About you and me?" queried Jane, a little breathlessly.

She did not altogether trust Percy's discretion, and began to feel rather uneasy.

"Yes. He has known you so long. I asked him if he thought I should have a chance later on, if I came back next year. He repeated what you said about the mountain. Though it was so terribly final, it showed me you wanted to keep my love, the love you foolishly thought might dwindle with possession. Beautiful mountain, I shall go on worshipping to the end, content to remain in the valley, if the heights above cast tender shadows down on me."

"Percy had no right to repeat. I should never have told you that feeling myself."

"Then I should never have known you quite so well. Don't grudge me one little glimpse into your mind. Tell me, where shall I find you, how shall I find you, on my return?"

"When will that be? How long?"

"Perhaps five years. Perhaps ten," he replied.

"Ten! Is it possible we shall both be alive in ten years?"

"Not only possible, probable."

"How strange! I was talking the other day of being thirty-two. I rather liked the idea. To-night it frightens me, because of you. The people I am among will see no very great change, for they will be growing older with me. But to a friend from the past, the life in between may perhaps be written on my face. You will say, 'she is altered, but not for the better.' People who love us dislike alteration. You won't be satisfied with the older woman, you will want the silly girl who worried you ten years ago."

"If it's you, that's all I shall ask, all I shall seek. A comrade who has not forgotten, despite the host of lovers in between, and probably a husband. He won't dislike me, because I shall have killed all sentiment by then. My hair will

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probably be grey, I might well be bald at forty-three. Ask me to dinner, and let us say, 'do you remember?' But you have not yet told me how I shall set about finding you."

Jane reflected.

"You must come to London in the season. For the rest of my life I shall always be in London for the season. Windycross has taught me that. Then ask the people you meet, 'Where is Jane Cardigan? What! not married yet?' Oh! by that time I shall have such a reputation every one will know my name. You will hear all the startling things I've done, the fashions I've set. I mean to be a leader, but at present I'm a little handicapped by youth."

"Heaven grant a special Providence may watch over you."

"It always does. We make our own lives to a great extent, and I intend to have a good time, till my dying day. That is one of the reasons why I don't want to live to be old. I couldn't rust out."

He looked with a certain wonder at the amazing vivacity of her face. She gave the idea of buoyant life and spontaneous brightness, not forced for effect, but bursting from her like sunshine.

"Mario is here," she said, "the artist who has just painted me. I must not cut his dance, he is so sensitive. You know, I am coming to see you off to Australia. Oh! yes, I arranged it with Sir William. He has promised to escort me. Surely you would like a last wave of my hand."

She had risen, and was moving towards the ballroom, her brilliant eyes glancing back at Harold.

Involuntarily he thought of the snowy mountain peaks it had been such poor victory to conquer, thought of them with a certain regret that man's foot should ever tread their eternal snows. The reverence they had lost, centred now in this dazzling girlish figure. She understood his nature, fathomed his love. She had made him suffer indescribably, but through the suffering, he saw a glimmer of future satisfaction, a shrine for the entombing of a great passion, where, in sanctity, love so earthly might rest, and perchance in time, become divine.

Monsieur Mario bowed in a graceful foreign way to his latest model.

"The gods," he said, "have been good to Mario to-night. Surely they dropped you from

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the skies, and my poor roving heart was all unwittingly at Windycross."

"I heard the wings of your soul beating on my window last night," replied Jane.

Her eyes wore a subtle expression ; she liked the lack of serious intention in the foreigner's attention.

"Crying open, open," he added in a whisper, "but Marguerite kept the shutter fast closed."

"She was afraid of catching cold," answered Jane, laughing.

She wanted to turn the conversation to jest, for Mario's expression brought the blood to her cheek, and Jane had no wish to be caught blushing in his presence.

They were standing in the doorway of the ballroom, and many eyes turned to pretty Miss Cardigan.

"Ah! no," Mario answered emphatically, "rather was she afraid of being scorched by a living flame."

"Come," Jane murmured, "we will dance."

"You are so light," he said, "so fragile, it is like dancing with a piece of lace. Quel plaisir, quelle chance!"

A skillful dancer, he guided her through the

moving crowd, as if they alone occupied the great ballroom. Other figures might have been phantoms, which barely brushed the light fabric of her gown.

Mario held her closely, with an air of possession in his clasp. For the moment at least she was all his own, merging her individuality in his, answering to his will. She was like a leaf in the arms of the wind, borne hither and thither unresistingly, with the music of the spheres accompanying each throb and pulse of nature. He tried to catch her eyes as he danced, to win a smile.

He was handsome as well as celebrated, for his pictures had been the talk of two seasons. Already the newspapers spoke of the new painting about to be presented to the public, in which a well-known Society lady had posed as a haymaker. People guessed to-night who the Society lady might be, especially as the same well-informed press had chronicled his visit to Windy-cross.

To dance with Mario was something of a revelation to an Englishwoman.

Jane, eager as ever for new sensations, realized this, and wondered at her past indifference. The artist guessed his triumph. He had captivated

others in the same way. His life was a chase, and he sought always the fair, the distinguished, the beautiful in womankind. He lived for art and for flirtation, hardly aware which came uppermost in his mind, but well assured that without those two elements he would no longer care for existence.

Jane forgot the *entourage*, the setting of the drama, forgot she was surrounded by the usual crowd of charity supporters at the well-worn familiar subscription dance. Lately no big ball in the cause of hospital, home, or soup kitchen, had considered itself complete, unless Miss Cardigan subscribed liberally.

Jane was away in fancy where wet mists and glowing landscapes made exquisite copy for an artist's brush. Mario turned her thoughts to when her blood flowed warmly, and every nerve tingled, hunting with the North Devon stag-hounds, who run, and kill, when most other packs throughout the country are weatherbound.

She called herself a town girl, but to-night she felt the exhilaration of the chase over a bleak wilderness. Strange that in a heated ballroom the shelterless exposure of an Exmoor winter should grip her mind.

To-night she would carry in her soul the wildness of the moors. Yet in Mario there was a warmth of Southern blood which appealed to her temperament.

She understood better now why he had called her "Siberia" at Windycross, when she stood aloof, why he longed for her to catch the sunburn he painted on his canvas.

It was her soul she had sheltered and guarded, as well as her complexion, and he knew it, but she had not danced with him then, she had not danced with him then!

She noticed, as she passed from the room, with Mario beside her, Harold Stone looked strangely in her direction, with the first look of disapproval she had ever detected on his face. Percy's eyes also followed her a little anxiously, and Sir William Lambdon was glancing at her partner.

"Perhaps it was impossible to lose yourself in a dream of bliss without advertising the fact," thought Jane, a trifle annoyed.

She held her head higher, which gave her proud little chin an arrogant air. She was conscious Harold Stone's size seemed to swell and overshadow the artistic figure of the painter.

"If we had danced at Windycross, we might

have known each other better," whispered Mario, guiding her to a sofa, and placing a cushion just where a touch of coloured silk showed up the whiteness of her neck.

"What nonsense! Is there so much in a dance?"

"So much," he said, "I should be afraid to tell. I am almost afraid to feel. You have given me a great pleasure to-night. I did not know you could give so much."

"You limited my powers," laughed Jane. "How is the red-nosed haymaker?"

"Mon Dieu! What sacrilege!"

"Forgive me, I do not make fun of your art, rather I make fun of myself."

"Which is the more inexcusable?"

He spoke endearingly.

"And you never wrote," he continued, "not one line even to acknowledge my small offering of chocolates."

"But I telegraphed my thanks. I always telegraph in preference, because people complain my letters are so troublesome to decipher. I must have been given the wrong kind of copy-books at school."

"A telegram carries no individuality," he com-

plained. "In it there is nothing private. A letter is a *tête-à-tête*, a telegram, general conversation."

"Still, at that *tête-à-tête* you would have said" (imitating his foreign accent), "' what have I done for such an agony of reading such a hand-writing?'"

Mario sighed.

"I read somewhere," he retorted —

"L'esprit n'est jamais las d'écrire
Lorsque le cœur est de moitié. . . ."

"You make the common mistake of crediting me with a heart," replied Jane. "What use should I have for those tender feelings ——"

"Those tender feelings that come in the dance," added Mario quickly, interrupting her.

He echoed her own self-knowledge, and his words brought with them a sense of shock.

"All movement which is quick and exciting makes for sensation," she replied. "Riding, motoring ——"

"Flying, valsing!" (again he broke in).

Jane shrugged her shoulders impatiently, he mistook the meaning.

"If only those people would go," he said, frowning at a couple opposite, "it disturbs our intercourse to have others near."

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Jane glanced in the direction indicated.

She saw a girl bending over her fan with a self-conscious air. A man, of the young, clean, healthy, English type, addressed her feverishly, with that look on his face so easy to read, so refreshing to the cynic losing his belief in love.

"Poor, dear things, I like them," answered Jane. "They are quite oblivious of us."

"I do not think so," replied Mario. "They mean to sit us out. Listen, the music calls, and the wretches will not move."

"Let us go, and give them a chance," laughed Jane, good-humouredly.

"No, no."

Mario spoke quickly, with a force of decision she had not expected. She felt herself swayed by it, against her own inclination. The moments went by in silent anticipation.

The girl opposite rose at last disappointedly, and her large expectant eyes turned to Jane with a reproachful expression, as she slowly passed. They seemed to say, "You have spoilt the hour of my life, you might have helped me."

Jane felt inwardly guilty and vexed.

Mario had curbed a kindly instinct, and she allowed his influence to predominate.

They were alone together now in complete seclusion. She had often been alone with him at Windycross, as he worked upon his sun-bathed canvas. Yet to-night there was a new element of mystery and fear in their solitude.

"Don't," she said sharply, pushing him away.

He was trembling. His face, so near her own, had brushed Jane's cheek. Her ear tingled with a half frustrated kiss.

"To be angry at so small a thing," he murmured passionately, "un baiser, un point rose qu'on met sur l'i du verbe aimer! Do you not remember how Cyrano describes it."

"Cyrano de Bergerac?"

"Yes.

"'Baiser. Le mot est doux . . .
Un baiser, mais à tout prendre, qu'est-ce?
Un serment fait d'un peu plus près,
Une promesse plus précise . . .
C'est un secret qui prend la bouche pour oreille . . .'"

Mario breathed the words insidiously; he made his voice a poem, his prayer a gentle art.

"The lines are pretty," she confessed.

"Listen," he continued, sighting success —

"Un baiser, c'est si noble, Madame,
Que la reine de France, au plus heureux des lords,
En a laissé prendre un, la reine même!"

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She shook her head.

"I think you should grant me one small privilege," he pressed, "you are a queen, the queen I adore. I am sad and faithful, but you have no pity, no heart. Can't you awake? Can't you live?"

Jane felt the stirrings of a dangerous sentiment. Her nature inclined to *abandon*, she hated restraint.

"Baiser," she quoted, "Le mot est doux!"

As she spoke a warning footstep checked Mairo.

Percy Paris stood before them. He was not smiling.

"Do you know, Jane," he said, "you are cutting Sir William Lambdon? He's looking horribly injured, and after all, he's your guest."

Her instinct as a hostess decided the question.

"Cutting Sir William, how shameful of me, and I like him so much. Thanks, Percy, for telling me. Where is he?"

"I'll show you if you come with me."

Escorted by her brother-in-law, she drifted away, nodding farewell to Mario.

He followed eagerly.

"You must give me another dance?"

"How is it possible?"

She showed him her programme.

"You see, I brought a large party, dear Monsieur. I am under so many obligations."

"One valse more, only one," he begged. "Do please, please, please—this strong wish of mine."

"The last extra then, after the end, if I am still here."

"To wait so long for a mere chance is painful," he replied, "but the best of the bad."

"Our dance is nearly over," said Sir William, dolefully, when Percy brought the culprit, full of pretty apologies and well-feigned regret.

"Let us sit and talk," said Jane, "we can dance later on. We have another together."

Quite naturally, as if the proceeding were not at all unconventional, Harold Stone joined them. Oddly enough the trio proved agreeable. Jane was surprised to find the awkward number could make such a pleasant coterie. Sir William drew Harold into the conversation with good-humoured tolerance, remembering how soon he would be away, every moment taking him further from England. To Harold he owed a delightful evening, and the acquaintance of Jane Cardigan.

They mentioned Mario casually.

Jane said little. She merely remarked his

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paintings were clever, and changed the subject.

Percy joined them, declaring Jane must be tired, and suggesting an early departure.

"Which means," she replied, "you are tired and want to go."

"Surely," he said, "you won't care to stay till the bitter end."

"Would it be so bitter?"

Jane's cheek dimpled. She followed his line of thought exactly, knowing he wanted to prevent her having that last dance with Mario. Yet only a few weeks ago the artist had been his guest. Why then this sudden change, this attitude of rallying round her, she noticed on the part of Percy—and others?

"I will go whenever you like," she said, with sudden humility.

So Mario waited in vain. Jane had vanished, with her strong body-guard.

He only smiled as he left the building, and looked up at the stars.

"There is plenty of time," he said, "plenty of time."

CHAPTER V

HAROLD STONE had spoken truly when he said years of work were not long years.

There is a swiftness in routine, which amazes the methodical.

When first he returned to his pastoral life, Jane remained constantly in his thoughts. Every beautiful mood of nature spoke to him of her. She was in the sundawn and sunset, he closed his eyes and he could hear her voice. She had whispered to him from the sea, during his long voyage, he found her eyes in the blue waters, her spirit in the white foam, sometimes the very breezes were the soft lips of Jane, which his had never touched.

All these tender fancies gilded his nights and days with the subtle lustre of romance. The man felt transported by memory of a loved one to some higher sphere of existence. After all, she had known how to work on his imagination, by giving liberally of her generous friendship, and withholding the boon of a closer relationship.

His last view of her, standing by Sir William, an emotional moisture in her eyes, but words of

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good cheer on her lips, was a thing to dream about and cherish.

How affectionately she pressed his hand between hers, with a whispered :—" God bless you," and with what wonder Sir William watched the farewell, in which the woman appeared deeply touched, but the man, starting on his long journey, looked frozen and unmoved.

Yet half an hour later, Jane's witty talk kept Sir William laughing incessantly, as they returned from the boat, while Harold Stone locked himself in his cabin, and buried his forehead in his hands.

She never told him in the chatty letters she subsequently penned to Australia, how she spent the rest of that day. She only remarked that saying good-bye was horrid, and she never meant to see any one else off as long as she lived, which conveyed the thought she really had suffered—bidding farewell—to a mere friend.

Jane showed wonderful constancy in her letters, the straggling erratic hand betraying its evanescent character in every line, appeared at intervals for years.

Her addresses were varied, for Jane's roving spirit took her to most of the fashionable centres of Europe. The news she detailed showed that

her life was one of keen pleasure, given up to the vanities and pastimes of her set.

At first she mentioned Mario occasionally, chiefly in connection with his work.

The haymaking picture had caused a sensation from the extraordinary realism of its painting. Other artists entreated her to sit for them, but she remained true to Mario, and firmly declined. Not in reality, she confessed, to flatter him, but because the whole thing was such a fearful nuisance, and a tax on one's time.

Nevertheless it seemed she was proud of Mario, for she sent a newspaper cutting describing the picture, in which Mario's intense feeling for subtle harmony of tone was especially praised. She marked the line, and wrote "my nose!" at the side, recalling she had confided to Harold her grievance of the sunburn.

Later on she told him, as "the greatest joke in the world," people were saying she and Mario were engaged! Percy considered this idea sufficiently prevalent to announce in the papers there was no truth in the report. His action much infuriated the artist, who greatly prided himself on the rumour, and a quarrel with Mr. and Mrs. Paris had ensued.

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Letters subsequently from Rome, Vienna, Cairo and Monte Carlo spoke of Sir William Lambdon's presence as a matter of course.

"He has come because I am here, and we know so many of the same people. Ethel is rather annoyed, as she says he is always following me about. But what does it matter? I'm surrounded with chaperones. There is a perfect plague of them in all these places. They offer themselves wholesale, and I pay the hotel bill. It would be too mean to refuse their services, when perhaps it is their only way of having a good time. Besides, they are sensible enough not to bother me, so I don't really mind."

All this was so like Jane, that Harold Stone read, smiled and understood.

The years were changing her very little. She was still "the wicked Aunt," with the great warm loving heart for her nephew Arthur.

Jane's scraps of information, dealing with the boy as he grew to manhood, had something maternal in their hope and pride. She told of his progress almost shyly, with an absence of her usual "abandon." Her expressions of delight and admiration were naive and genuine.

Arthur was so popular ! Every one liked him,

now that he had begun to appear in society under the wing of his Aunt.

Ethel was growing a *religiense*, "more East-endy than ever," to use Jane's own expression, while Percy had given up trying to be funny, and taken to golf instead. The game having become the passion of his life, he spent most of his time at golf clubs, or dull hotels in close proximity to links.

Arthur was fairly strong, but the doctor would not pass him for the army, and no other profession had been thought of. As there was no reason for him to work, Jane had suggested he should remain "a gentleman at large," in attendance on his Aunt.

Ethel and Percy were not averse to the idea, since every year their fears increased for Jane's reputation, as her pleasures and extravagance became more notorious.

Her resolve to remain a spinster never faltered, but the game of flirtation kept its savour.

With men she was always a prize just eluding their grasp, a phantom beckoning them on through a mazy dance, through gay thoughtless hours, to the final cup of forced resignation.

For some, the suffering counted as nothing in

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comparison to the delight obtained by Jane's society, with others it went harder, they were soured perhaps for years.

Good women suffered the mistrust of men to whom they were willing to give all their faith and loyalty, because pretty Miss Cardigan had first plucked the bloom, destroying those sweet ideals with which the stronger sex are blest, at the outset of their lives.

In the eyes of Arthur Paris, Jane Cardigan was perfection. To him alone she showed her best side, the true self within her, capable of pure affection, ready for sacrifice, strong in love, noble of purpose.

She talked to her nephew straight from her heart, revealing to him alone that coveted holiest of holies.

Even in her merriest moments she demanded homage, and through all the fun of her light badinage, which made her such an excellent companion, Arthur never lost his respect.

Unconsciously the young man was as much a slave to her will, as the lovers she attracted by the wit, beauty and wealth surrounding her.

She took care Arthur grew up to be the best sort of man.

He was wonderfully unaffected and unspoilt by popularity.

Fond of sport, he and "the wicked Aunt" were familiar figures in the hunting field, while her nephew made an excellent host at Jane's shooting parties in Scotland.

Quite young, he became a man of the world. He understood people. Miss Cardigan's vast experience was a treasure house of useful store fully at his disposal. Besides, he had always been clever. Jane detected in him a strain of originality, distinctly refreshing.

He seldom thought ill of people, a trait in his character which especially pleased her, for she hated back-biting and malice, having suffered from it continually.

Her own law of life, which put pleasure before everything, became his from habit. He had in reality little of the butterfly in his nature, but fell in naturally with the surroundings of Jane.

From his parents he received scant sympathy, both being absorbed in their own affairs. They gave him a very conventional affection. In Ethel there was no passion of maternity, and it was doubtful if Percy had ever really loved any one but himself.

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Mrs. Paris inspired her son with a pronounced aversion to good works. She made her charity so dreary and unenlivening, that instinctively a highly strung organization shrank from contact with its drab monotony.

She never gilded her work with brightness, or brought any imagination into the daily routine of life.

Small wonder the worship of the "wicked Aunt" should be the dominating force in Arthur's life, for men love women who are sunny and unsoured, seeking bright places rather than the gloom.

Eventually and inevitably Jane's letters to Harold Stone shortened, dwindled, and finally ceased.

He accepted their decline in a spirit of resignation. How could he expect the untiring continuance of such favours? He was only surprised they had lasted so long.

Each day fresh friends would naturally cross her path, with claims on her consideration. New faces would blot out the old, recent interests delete past fancies. Life must ever be passing on, no change was to be regretted, no loss mourned too deeply, according to Harold Stone's philosophy.

Yet the love which might have been expected to crown his lonely days, failed to present itself, though from time to time he met desirable partners, pretty faces, and minds well stored with the knowledge indispensable to a Colonial's wife.

Something held him back.

Was it memory, subtle, clinging, persistent, echoing across the years? The flash of a smile through the mists of time, the thrill of a hand clasp long denied. Were the eyes of all women but the ghosts of Jane Cardigan's eyes, mocking him with the uncanny chill of apparitions?

Once a small girl with flaxen curls crossed his path, and of a sudden his heart stood still, he held his breath, his head reeled. Those riotous curls floating in the breeze were Jane's curls come back from the past, with the same tender gloss, with the baby fairness. He called to the child, and touched them. She laughed as Jane might have laughed, and escaped away, as Jane escaped from the haven of his heart's desire. He watched the little one out of sight, the warmth within him died.

"Her child would have curls like that," he said, sighing at his own folly.

When at last opportunity offered, and the idea

of a long anticipated holiday became an established fact, Harold Stone had been so long forgotten by his English friends, he did not even know if Jane were married.

It seemed to him highly improbable she would still be single, a woman with so wide a choice, and such powers of fascination.

Those anti-matrimonial views were surely just a whim of youth, a mere girl's fancy. Still, her resolve, he knew, remained firm for many years after their parting.

He tried often to picture their next meeting. It might be a chance one in society, but more probably not. He would discover her address, and write to remind her of their compact. Had he not promised to find her again?

The idea of surprising her, however, allured him. Such an act would be especially delightful in a ballroom. He recalled so vividly the dance after her "forget-me-not" dinner. Perhaps he could see Sir William first, and make him arrange some such encounter.

Jane was the little bit of drama in Harold Stone's life, the something which lifted it from the commonplace. In their acquaintance nothing had been ordinary or prosaic. She had taken

him by storm, and the impression of that wild hurricane, remained unaltered through all the scorching summers of separation.

Never until he casually met "the wicked Aunt" in a Mayfair drawing-room, had he realized the meaning of friendship. His friends were mere puppets to alleviate the otherwise monotonous process of existence, not active forces in his life.

Jane's friendship caused a revolution in all his preconceived ideas. She was "sensation vitalized!" She brought herself into such strange harmony with his nature, that she was his thought, his pulse, his being, and all without giving back one note of passion, or one breath of love.

So to see her again meant the renewal of youth.

He could not judge of the change in himself, but he supposed alteration had come inevitably. He would be a different Harold Stone, simply because she would be a different Jane, seeing him with the eyes of a fresh impression.

Possibly, too, her taste would have changed. The man she chose for her friend at two and twenty, might not be the man she favoured in her thirtieth year. The great law of advancement made for inconstancy.

He therefore journeyed homeward with certain

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misgivings, prepared for the death of old ideals, fortified against that hard process, disillusionment.

He had never felt so strong as now, so completely master of himself.

Age granted him at least some gifts.

While taking much, Time hands back certain change for the sovereign boon of youth. The sound silver coin of experience holds soothing balm, and proves of wondrous value to the children of earth.

Harold Stone arranged to arrive in England the beginning of May. London would be his destination naturally. There he felt sure of finding Jane.

He wondered if she had ever missed a season, since the summer at Windycross.

He sent an advance letter to Sir William, and found a reply awaiting him at Morley's Hotel.

His old friend answered in genuine terms of pleasure.

"Look me up to-morrow morning at my rooms in St. James' Street between twelve and one," he wrote, "let us lunch together. If you can't come, I will call at your hotel during the afternoon in the hope of finding you."

Harold Stone, so newly arrived, found himself

without engagements, and gladly fell in with the plan.

He strolled from his hotel to St. James' Street, thoroughly enjoying the bustle of London, and looking curiously at pretty faces in passing carriages, hoping he might recognize Jane's curls under the wonderful floral hats.

He trusted time had not changed the fashion of her hair. Surely she was a law unto herself, and would always keep her own original style.

Jane must have been born with a taste for the picturesque, since everything about her expressed the beauty of artistic thought, of freshness and individuality.

It was good to think of Jane, to know soon he would be near her, hearing her laugh again, the little musical infectious laugh which haunted him through the years, following her sharp wit, and feeling perhaps her sympathy, with its old maternal note, so at variance with the life she led. The springs of youth welled up in him. To be alive to-day meant keen sensation, the appreciation of old scenes made new from long absence. On all sides his eyes sought the changes inevitable.

Sir William Lambdon looked much the same,

as he greeted him with a cheery smile and wringing hand-shake.

They talked on many subjects before Harold Stone at last drew the conversation to Miss Cardigan. He was seated in a comfortable chair by the open window, with blazing sills of scarlet blooms. He kept his eyes turned away from Sir William, as he remarked casually :—

“And how’s the little lady who saw me off when I left England? It seems a century ago! I suppose she is married by now.”

Sir William had to think for a moment who the little lady could be. Then the scene flashed back to his memory, of Jane half tearful, waving her handkerchief, and whispering under her breath, “Isn’t saying good-bye horrid? Don’t let us prolong it longer than we can help.”

“Oh! Jane Cardigan,” he replied. “Of course, she was a great friend of yours. I believe you introduced us. No, Jane is still free, she’s refused the best offers in London to my certain knowledge.”

Jane free—still free.

The words reechoed in Harold Stone’s mind. He could hardly believe she had kept her resolve. Was it a hope, faint, distant, but insistent,

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which caught his breath, holding him speechless? Surely not, for how could a man like himself imagine he would ever attract a woman of Jane Cardigan's fastidious taste?

"I should like to see her again," he said at last.

"Naturally. She's the most interesting woman I ever came across. Mrs. Paris used to say I ran after her. Why, of course I ran! To be with Jane means you will enjoy yourself, she's such a capital companion. I never miss an opportunity of being with her. Only this spring she and her nephew came for a cruise on my yacht. I never had a better time in my life. Jane was the heart and soul of the party."

Sir William's familiar use of her Christian name jarred a little on Harold Stone. His mind had travelled back to the days when she and Sir William were new acquaintances. He forgot the increase of intimacy which years warranted.

"Is Miss Cardigan a good sailor?"

"One of the best. Can stand any weather. She was like a girl of seventeen, full of spirits, absurdly young looking, kept us all going with her ceaseless fun. She's got better looking lately. I don't know what she's done to herself. I met

her the other night, and she gave me quite a start."

"How do you mean? She was always pretty, particularly so."

"Yes, but now she's a radiant beauty. Every one turns to stare at her. She's astonishingly lovely. It's only lately I've noticed the change. Such a complexion! Her cheeks are an extraordinarily brilliant pink, one really wonders if it's all Jane Cardigan, or whether part of it is kept in a drawer."

His listener frowned. The idea of Jane being anything but quite natural came as a shock.

The rouge on the cheeks of certain society women he had recognized on his way to St. James' Street filled him with a sense of disgust. If Jane were as these ——

He puffed impatiently at his cigar.

"I hope she's not spoiling herself," he said. "She was one in a thousand."

"Spoiling herself! Rather not! I tell you the result is bewildering. Possibly she's turned vegetarian, or taken to some wonderful diet prescribed by a fashionable beauty doctor. They are up to all sorts of tricks nowadays. People say she is going to marry the young Duke of Darrell."

"Do you think so?"

The absentee showed such marked interest in Jane Cardigan and her doings, that Sir William warmed to the subject sympathetically.

"No. It's my opinion she means to stick to freedom, and the living of her own life. She's unusual, and one can't judge her on the lines of ordinary people."

Harold Stone began to respect Sir William's insight to character.

"That's what I always said. That's the reason I never had any patience with Mrs. Paris. She used to treat Miss Cardigan like other girls, and expect her to move in the common groove. Of course she was disappointed, for a peculiarly original nature must go its own way, and have its own bent."

"By Jove! She has gone her own way, too!" laughed Sir William, looking back on the escapades of Jane Cardigan with singular amusement. "She's gone along the flowery road, the high road of pleasure, with music, music all the way. She has her own private band always in attendance. She has given some of the most talked of entertainments in London. Socially she's a reigning success, other hostesses come and go, but Jane continues popular forever."

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"Such a career makes enemies," said Harold Stone, thinking to himself, "some day she may want a friend."

In such a case he had little doubt who that friend would be. A sense of loyalty reigned supreme in his heart. It seemed hard there was no apparent way of serving Jane, of proving his devotion.

"A lot she cares for her enemies," declared Sir William, smiling. "Her reputation, she says, is her own affair, not theirs, but if it amuses them to take it away from her, they are welcome to do what they please. She is quite indifferent to scandal, and I have never seen her seriously annoyed. It is what Mrs. Paris calls, 'Jane's terrible callousness'!"

"Is Mario still on the list of her admirers?"

"Oh! the artist. She was terribly talked about with him some years ago. I must say I didn't quite like that friendship myself, but it has cooled down now. I honestly believe she just petted him like a poodle dog, but no one else took the same lenient view. He did a splendid portrait of her for last year's Academy, full length, life sized. It was the picture of the year. He is busy now at the Court of St. James', painting Royalty."

"I expect Miss Cardigan will be too busy to

give me a thought," said Harold Stone, with sudden depression of manner. "Perhaps she will hardly remember my name."

All he had heard seemed forcing him further away from his ideal, and the meeting so long anticipated.

"Not a bit of it! Jane isn't like that. She'll be charmed to see you."

The words unconsciously reproached Harold Stone. So, after all her proofs of friendship, it needed another should tell him Jane wasn't like that.

He felt angry with himself for misjudging her. He must rise above the conflicting influences, ignore the fact of her gay life and large acquaintance, recalling only the forget-me-not dinner, his promise to return, her assurance of a welcome.

Why mistrust those words from the past? Why anticipate failure? For a time, at least, they might shut the outside world away, and regain the old familiarity of spirit, which had grown so surprisingly during their brief friendship, when Jane was only twenty-two.

"I am expecting Arthur Paris this morning, I asked him to look in," said Sir William. "You would not know him, for of course he has grown

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since you left. He's bright and clever, there's something of Jane in him."

"Then I think I shall like Arthur Paris."

"Undoubtedly. Nearly every one does. He makes friends quickly. I fancy he gets rather an influence over people without knowing it. I noticed him a good deal on the yacht. It's a little hobby of mine to study character."

"One of the best studies."

"That young fellow has a good deal more in him than any one suspects. He has not developed his faculties yet. Some day he will come out strong. I can't pretend to guess in what line. I feel he would do more in the world if he were not so devoted to his brilliant Aunt. He is giving up his life to her, and she has no idea she's demanding a sacrifice. On the contrary, she considers herself a fairy relative. Jane is his career, and that's not right. Some day I shall tell her my ideas. She won't snub me, she will listen with wrapt attention, and say at the end, with her most charming smile, 'How awfully funny you are!'"

"I shall ask Paris when I can see Miss Cardigan. He will know her movements," said Harold Stone, hopefully.

"Yes. We'll take him to lunch with us at the Savoy."

As Sir William spoke, a young man entered, so unlike the bright specimen of youth Harold Stone had expected, he would hardly have recognized him, but for a certain haunting likeness to Jane.

Arthur Paris stood looking at the two men, seeming quite stupefied for a moment, and the thought flashed across Harold's mind, "Does he drink?"

Sir William, knowing better, went quickly to his side.

"What's the matter?" he asked, in a kind, low voice.

He saw at once the ghastly pallor of Arthur's face, the tremulous lip, the steel blue eye, shifting, tearless, but miserable.

He did not belong, in this hour, to the gay, the thoughtless, the worldly, with whom his lot was cast, there was nothing in his manner to connect him with the happy, free, untrammelled pleasure-lovers of a London May.

"It's too terrible," he stammered, his whole soul in the words, "they've condemned her, they've condemned Jane!"

Sir William was at a loss to understand. His

mind turned at once to the petty scandals which were always about her path. It was not usual for Arthur to take Miss Cardigan's maligners seriously. Like "the wicked Aunt," he usually treated malice with mirth, or mild cynicism.

"What do you mean? Who has condemned Miss Cardigan?"

Harold Stone spoke. The fighting spirit of the Colonial was upon him. His blood was up, and his ire rose at the mere idea of a woman condemned. He waited in deep concern for some explanation of the mysterious words.

"The best doctors in London!" answered Arthur. "They say she is in a rapid decline, they say" (he broke off a moment with an effort at control) "she can only live a few weeks!"

The reply fell like a thunderbolt on Harold Stone's ears. He understood now the whiteness of that young face, which looked into theirs with such a terror of grief and rebellion.

Sir William appeared stunned. He, who had spoken so lightly of Jane but a few moments since, giving a racy account of her flirtations and extravagances, doubting slightly the brilliancy of that fatal colour, the hectic flush of beautifying consumption.

Harold could never have believed there was so much tenderness, or real heart in the man. His face showed his feelings, deep and personal. For the first time the onlookers guessed he genuinely loved the woman whose splendid companionship made life a merry jest. He put an arm round Arthur's shoulder, and his touch seemed to pull the young fellow together. He spoke to him consolingly.

"You see," Arthur replied apologetically, "I only just heard. I'm going to Hindhead at once; she was ordered there, and some friends lent her a house. I thought she went because she was tired! I hadn't an idea ——"

Again his voice faltered. Already he felt the darkness and the night.

The men beside him knew what he suffered. They saw before them the ravages of the shock. It was as if all the sunlight in life had been suddenly plucked away.

"Doctors are not always infallible," said Sir William. "She'll cheat them yet, she has such vitality, such pluck, God bless her!"

He forced a ray of hope across the gloom, deceiving himself, and seeking to deceive others. Inwardly he was saying, "the world without Jane."

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He dared not think what these words meant. He knew now why he, too, had remained single all these years, why the prospective wives provided for him by considerate friends, had failed to make the required impression. Jane held his fate, with many others, in her light, delicate hands.

Oh! the cruelty—the cruelty of it all!

“When can I see her?” asked Harold Stone.

He would fight for that interview if all the doctors in the kingdom stood at her door, to try and keep him out. He would see Jane alive again at any cost, he would speak with her, touch her hand.

Arthur for the first time noticed he was talking to a stranger.

“Do you know my Aunt?” he asked, in some surprise.

He had no recollection of Sir William’s friend.

“Yes. My name is Stone. I have just returned from Australia. I don’t wonder you have forgotten me. When I left England you were an Eton boy, invalided home. I saw you once in London, and once at Windycross.”

“I remember now. She has often spoken of you.”

The simple words brought something of relief.

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Jane had made his name familiar, he was not such an exile as he feared.

"Can I come to Hindhead?"

Arthur made a sign of assent.

"She will like to see her old friends, I know," he muttered brokenly. "You and Sir William must both come soon."

He turned to go. They did not try to detain him. With shoulders bent, he left the room, without a conventional good-bye.

Sir William followed him down the stairs.

"Have you seen her since you heard the news?" he asked.

Arthur shook his head.

"Bear up, my lad, for her sake remember, for her sake!"

He forgot for the moment Arthur was not still a boy.

"How will she take it?" he asked, almost fiercely, as if Sir William must know.

"With smiles," replied the older man, and his tone carried conviction.

He watched Arthur Paris drive away, then he muttered again to himself, "with smiles!"

CHAPTER VI

SIR WILLIAM and Harold Stone decided to go separately to Hindhead, it was an occasion when neither required companionship.

Each felt, "the heart knoweth its own bitterness," and comment merely made their mutual sorrow greater.

Harold Stone arranged to start the following day, on the chance of seeing Jane Cardigan. He sent a telegram warning Arthur of his visit.

Sir William knew the house she occupied, it overlooked a beautiful valley, and bore the name of "Hazelhind."

He directed his friend accordingly, and Harold Stone caught a fast morning train to the picturesque setting of this last sad drama in a short, yet brilliant life.

The more he thought of Jane, the more his doleful reflections puzzled him.

He believed she had led an utterly frivolous existence, yet clung to the strong conviction she had been sent into the world for some great purpose, some definite good. He tried to think of a single way in which she had benefited man-

kind, and though this probing of his mind produced no satisfactory result, she still appeared to him as a being apart, and sacred.

What quality did she possess in her fragility, at once so strong, so magical, yet vague? The sweetness and purity of her voice, her eyes, her whole self, were at variance with the life of worldly pleasure she had made her own.

Without using one moment of her precious time beneficently, it seemed to him she irradiated mankind, as stray sunbeams unconsciously bring joy to otherwise sordid places.

She had been born to make brightness, to become the very essence of endearment to those who offered her their unsought devotion. Nothing in Jane appeared mediocre, all she gave was of the best, only when great demands were made upon her affections she stubbornly withheld from giving.

Now this rare achievement of nature, this star, was to burn out its brilliant light in the very heyday of a glad career. This spirit of love, this force, so full of vitality, this fair, beautiful image of woman, stood doomed in early summer, when the breath of spring still lingered on the earth.

Might he not hear the distant voices in her voice, calling those eternal elements of divinity

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back to their home, and see the paradise in her eyes, which only the true seer may discern? Or would he rather find the wall of flesh in which the real Jane lay entombed, had shut out any clearer vision, leaving him, broken and bleeding, on a lower plane.

Harold Stone had overtaxed his physical powers since the blow fell, and the knowledge of her illness filled him with gloomy foreboding. He could neither sleep nor eat ; hard, exhausting, mental pain held him in its grasp.

He knew when he reached Hazelhind, he was in no fit state for the meeting.

He dismissed the cab at the gate, and walked up the drive. The movement steadied his nerves.

It was so strange to be going to meet Jane, and not to feel the desire for haste. Rather he dawdled purposely, and rang the door bell so softly he felt half convinced it would not be heard.

When at last he found himself ushered into a sunny room with open windows, commanding a wonderful view of the valley, the sense of rhythm, so peculiar to Jane and her surroundings, made itself felt with the balm of a refreshing peace.

A slight girlish figure rose from a cushioned chair. Two frail welcoming hands were stretched

out to him, full of an emotional gladness, so real, so tender, so sincere, they seemed to sweep away the intervening years with the magic of tremulous expressional power.

He stood before her speechless, while she smiled upon him, the eternal youth in her soul beaming through her eyes.

The subtle, mysterious force of her being held him in the spell of the past, and wonder of the present.

She was breathless, but radiant, and laughed a little at his evident emotion.

"Poor, dear man," she said, "you looked quite frightened as you came in! Arthur showed me your telegram. Why didn't you wire to me? Do you imagine a pleasurable shock ever hurts an invalid?"

Just for a second her illness had escaped him. It appeared impossible the radiant face, so exquisitely painted by a cruel disease, would soon pass forever from the sight of men.

"I can't believe you are ill," he stammered. "You will get better, I know it, I am certain."

He hardly realized what he said as he gently put her back into the quaint carved chair by the open window. The sun touched her hair, making those same flaxen curls, long remembered, a richer gold.

"Then don't believe it, I would much rather you did not. We will disbelieve together, Harold, and be happy."

She spoke slowly, in that low, gentle way of hers, and raised soft eyes with a bewitching glance to his troubled face.

The man of experience, resolved on self-control, faded, and the more human part of him gained mastery. Instinctively he knelt at her side, raining kisses on her hands.

"Oh! Jane—Jane—Jane!"

The words were almost a sob.

She placed her little fingers on his head.

"It's too good of you to show me what you feel," she said.

For a moment the brightness faded from her cheek. A strange unreadable expression altered the look in her eyes, which had smiled in unison with her lips, yet she kept her brave soul at poise amid the force of circumstances. She was the strong character, he the weak.

"I would have liked to make your home-coming so happy," she murmured, with the first touch of regret in her tone he had heard.

"Ah! don't think of that. All the happiness I want is just to know you never really forgot me,

to feel I am remembered so tenderly to-day. You gave me a smile I shall never forget, as I came in just now. It told me you were the same. It spoke of courage."

Jane had lived too long in society not to appreciate the obligations of friendship. She had that exquisite inborn courtesy, which shrinks from inflicting personal grievances on others. To open her heart and show, even to a lover, the gaping wound, the black disaster, would have seemed to her sensitive joy-giving nature, an outrage upon good taste and hospitality.

The things of the modern world, the manners and customs of her set, were by this time ingrained indelibly, as the simple laws of existence control the minds of growing children.

To avoid the social side of any question, even death, would have been foreign to her. The coming of that dread assassin must be veiled by a *plaisanterie*, to trick onlookers into the belief, Jane Cardigan's spirit could never be broken.

"Tell me the history," she said, "of the past years. I can listen better than talk. I want to hear all about your life, your journey back, your ideas for the future."

A quick sympathy radiated from her, the sym-

pathy which time develops, and experience enlarges. With a few questions she drew him on to tell of his aspirations and failures. In trying to interest her, he regained perfect composure. It was easy to comply with the request while those shining eyes were upon him.

He did his utmost to entertain and amuse his listener. Like the Jane of old she was quick to see a point, to catch always the humorous side of every situation, and flashes of wit sparkled to the surface, which surprised Harold Stone. Her manner infected his with its spontaneity.

Suddenly strains of music playing softly floated up the valley. The visitor paused.

"What's that?" he asked.

"My band. They are playing down there in the trees. It's rather cheery, isn't it? I am very fond of my little troop of musicians. Ethel thinks it rather absurd, but I believe she enjoys the music for all that. She and Percy are here. They're very kind, and don't bother me at all. If special friends of mine come, they go to their own sitting-rooms, unless I say I want them. I rather trembled when first I was ill, and heard of my sister's advent. I feared a sermon on a mis-spent life. But she has never said a word."

"I should think not. You are always kind to everybody. Is there no credit in that?"

"Not if being kind is a pleasure to oneself, credit lies in sacrifice."

He noticed her voice had faltered slightly over those words—"a misspent life."

Did she regret, he wondered, her gay years of wandering where fashion led? Had the sweets left a bitter taste?

He would have given much to see into Jane's mind at that moment, or to have felt sufficiently intimate with her to touch upon so delicate a subject.

With the shadow of the end near, he dared not betray curiosity.

The restraint natural to men, held him from touching on deeper matters. He was a little afraid of religion. To speak of the soul would have seemed almost a liberty, from his point of view, at such a time.

"Arthur has grown into a splendid fellow," he said. "His mother must be proud of him."

"Not nearly so proud as I am," declared Jane.

She spoke with merriment now, and the old light manner.

"Do you know," she added, "I am secretly surprised Ethel never resented my appropriation

of her boy. I think it shows nature could not really have intended her to be a mother. The wicked Aunt had, from the first, felonious designs upon that young life. She meant to attach it to herself, and succeeded even better than she dared hope. He is more mine than Ethel's. Perhaps she has not realized this. If she did, she wouldn't mind. Were I to interfere with some of her dear dirty people in the East End I could never expect to be forgiven."

Jane laughed, and the little laugh caused a fit of coughing which racked her frame. Her breathless speaking had given no idea of fatigue, but rather a sense of eager energy, strangely vital and impressive.

To see her sudden suffering struck Harold like a blow. He winced beneath it and paled. He dared not look at her, keeping his eyes on a distant plantation of young birches, and a low yew hedge, winding its close-clipped way to a herbaceous border.

At last silence fell, the paroxysm passed, and as if by mutual consent they remained speechless, Jane with her head flung back, her eyes half closed.

"Can I do anything for you?" he asked presently.

She looked up and smiled at him.

"Oh! thanks, I'm better. You must excuse me, but it's like that sometimes, so tiresome!"

"If I could bear it for you, I would do so willingly," he whispered.

"I believe you are speaking the truth," she answered, that old touch of coquetry stealing back. "You are so faithful, you were always true to me."

"Always. There was never an hour, never a moment, since I first saw you, I was not true."

"I wonder," she said, "if things were different——"

She paused. The spirit of flirtation had not utterly died within her. She liked to hear of his devotion, to feel its strength, though it formed but a drop in the ocean of that great tide, which brought to her feet the hearts of men.

A look of deep bewilderment crossed Harold Stone's face. He flushed to his forehead.

"If things were different——" He repeated the words stammering.

Then his eyes sought hers with a question in their depths, which she answered in a gentle undertone.

"Too late, alas! I have lived to myself, and

the past, well, it is always the past, isn't it? We can't make it the future, or it would be very different, so different, that perhaps you and I might be married, Harold."

She was romancing for her own amusement. She liked to think the words possibly pleased him, hardly guessing the tumult they created in his mind.

"You would have made a good husband," she continued, regarding him critically, "but I doubt if I should have made a good wife. Too frivolous perhaps, too self-willed and self-absorbed. The wicked Aunt was better single. She knew that. She had wisdom. Listen, they are playing my favourite valse. I wish we were dancing. Harold, I shall never dance again."

The moment she had spoken she wished the words unsaid, for the look of pain which came into his face.

Rising she placed her hand on his arm.

"Come, we won't think of anything sad or depressing, the day is too fine. I am going to take you for a walk in the sun, only up and down the terrace, very slowly."

So they passed out together, Jane in her frail elegance and transparent beauty, reminding him of the flowers which must fade so soon, though

they made such a brave show of colour and glory in the picturesque garden.

At every two or three steps she paused for breath, trying to hide her weakness by feigning to listen to the music.

"That's a pretty passage," she would say, lending an attentive ear, and Harold liked to feel her leaning on his arm.

Presently Arthur and his mother joined them. Mrs. Paris was greatly changed. Her face wore a softer expression, she treated Jane like an indulged and much loved child, which could do no wrong. Her illness had chased from her sister's mind all resentment and disapproval.

Harold Stone left with a different opinion of Ethel Paris, from the rather harsh feeling he held for her in the past.

His last view of Jane was standing among the flowers, waving her hand as he drove away.

He had promised to return as she murmured, "Au revoir, God bless you, dear one."

His reply barely rose above a whisper. He hated to show emotion, and there was a sob in his throat.

"At any moment I will come."

"I know," she answered, "I know."

CHAPTER VII

DURING the next few days many friends came to see Jane, and not once was she unable to receive them. The doctor declared it was a severe tax on her strength, but she would deny herself to no one.

She seldom let Arthur out of her sight, except when visitors from London made demands upon her failing energy.

To be with Arthur was a restful yet exquisite companionship. She knew all he felt without his telling her. No occasion for him to say "If I could bear it for you!"

His yearning and his love needed no words. Their close friendship spoke for itself, had its own language.

Jane was quick enough to see the change in him since he realized her illness must end fatally.

Unlike other sufferers, she never for a moment blinded herself to the fact she was doomed. She accepted the sentence as inevitable, and grew gradually accustomed to the idea. Her chief thought centred still in Arthur. She must hide

her pain from him if possible. She must let him believe she hoped to recover. He was so part of herself, that in trying to lighten his load, she suffered less.

"I want Arthur to go to London for me," Ethel said one evening. "I have been trying to persuade him to run up to-morrow, Jane, but he won't leave you. I think it would do him good, and divert his thoughts a little. Of course Percy is quite willing to go and do my business, but we both agreed Arthur looked as if he needed a little change."

"He's fretting, you see," said Jane. "I have told him we must be philosophical, and take things as they come. Worrying won't make me any better, yet I really believe he tortures himself, poor fellow, because of his wicked Aunt."

"Oh! Jane, I wish you would not call yourself that."

Ethel pressed her sister's hand affectionately, and tears rose suddenly to her eyes.

"But it's true, dear. I have always been the wicked Aunt. You can't pretend just because I'm ill that my life has been one of duty or sacrifice."

"That name was an old joke, it hurts me to hear it mentioned now."

"All right, Ethel, I will remember. Forgive me, I did not mean to be inconsiderate."

"Forgive you, why, of course."

"I'll be the saintly Aunt in the future," Jane continued, unable to resist the remark, which dimpled the now thin cheek with a smile at her own expense. "You know, even the devil was a saint when sick!"

Ethel glanced nervously at her sister. She never had, and never would, understand Jane.

"I feel sure you are right about Arthur," the invalid declared. "He shall go to-morrow. I will make him. Yes, he must certainly go."

She was lying on a couch, and closed her eyes drowsily. In reality she had no desire for sleep, but was thinking out a sudden new idea, which set her heart beating faster, which fluttered her pulses, and stirred her blood.

How tame was this crawling daily nearer death, this prolonging of a hopeless life in a bracing atmosphere, this slow killing of a body under sentence! She wondered she had endured it for a moment, she, Jane Cardigan, the madcap, the gad-about, the restless soul of frivolity.

In that moment of silence she soared away from the bondage of her curse. She rose above

the ills of the flesh, which fought and defeated her.

She could not overcome her enemy, but she might defy and elude the penance of the conqueror for a few hours at least.

To scheme again, to intrigue a little, was to clasp hands once more with the old life, and shake off the shackles of the present.

Her face had such a divine expression as she lay there so passive, and apparently resigned, that Ethel pictured her soul communing with angels. Possibly there were bright spirits near, whispering of the world to come, a home of heavenly glory, a radiance beyond the gloom of temporary vision.

"I want to write a letter," Jane said.

"Won't it tire you?"

Ethel fetched a writing case, upon which her sister pencilled cheerful notes to kind enquirers, who sent frequent messages and offerings to the shrine of their popular and much missed Jane.

"No. I can write slowly. I think my writing has improved lately. I am never in a violent hurry now. I have time to think."

"Still, it's a physical effort. If you like to dictate I will be your scribe."

"Thanks, but this letter is private."

Jane stole a shy look at Ethel.

"Perhaps," she added, "you would be kind enough to address an envelope."

"Certainly. Who to?"

"Monsieur Mario, at his London studio."

Ethel's face hardened slightly.

"Certainly," she said, with set lips. Then after a pause:—"Are you going to ask him here?"

"No. I am not so inconsiderate. I told him he wasn't to come on any account, I absolutely forbade him."

"Why?"

"For your sake and Percy's. I am not so ungrateful as to inflict him upon you after your quarrel, it would be awkward for every one. As you and Percy are good enough to be here, when I can do nothing to amuse you, at least I will not ask a man to the house with whom you are not on speaking terms."

"You know our disagreement was entirely on your account. We thought he made you conspicuous, and behaved in a manner so eccentric and unconventional, that everybody said ——"

"Please, Ethel, spare me the old story. I was

talked about with others, poor Mario wasn't the only one who showed a lack of discretion. It never troubled me. I was only sorry you and Percy broke with him."

"It was better. We had to protest. The world at least knew we did not approve of the way he persecuted you."

"I assure you it was a very pleasant persecution. But don't let us discuss a subject upon which we can never agree. I owe Mario a letter, and I particularly want it posted to him to-night."

Jane began writing in pencil, and Mrs. Paris obediently addressed the envelope.

She would much like to have seen the contents of Jane's note. Her sister's friendship with the artist had been a mystery to her for years. The remembrance of their first meeting at Windy-cross still rankled in her mind. She could never forget the way she unwittingly threw them together, or forgive herself for permitting, and even suggesting that Jane should sit to him.

At the present time she still mistrusted Mario, and felt she could never meet him without a sense of resentment and strong personal dislike.

He was a man of many enemies, yet it pleased

him to say they had done him more good than his friends. He courted criticism as much in private life as in his professional career. He liked to be noticed, he would rather be hated than ignored.

Jane smiled a little to herself as she folded the sheet of paper into the envelope Ethel passed her.

"You might call Arthur," she said, "and I'll persuade him to go to London to-morrow."

"I half fear you may not be successful," replied Ethel. "He would not hear of it just now."

"Send him to me," sighed Jane, arranging her cushions more comfortably and relaxing her muscles, with the air of a kitten tired of play, stretching itself in the sun before falling asleep. There was certainly something animal in the graceful ease with which Jane composed herself for slumber.

Arthur came in presently on tiptoe alone. He was frightened of disturbing her. She looked up, with a tired air.

He could not have guessed the excitement lurking at her heart.

"Arthur, dear!"

He came to her side, and bent over her.

She caught his hand, and laid it against her burning cheek.

"I want you to do something for me."

His pale face visibly brightened. He was only happy when he found some way of serving her.

"Good!" he answered.

"Will you go to London for me to-morrow? No one else can do my commissions exactly right. I have a fancy for some flowers from Gérard, in pretty gold baskets, with big ribbons on the handles. The flowers here are very sweet, but so countrified. I want the kind which makes one think of the season and parties, you know. Am I not silly? Then I have written down the name of a valse, it's rather an old-fashioned one, but I should like to hear it again, for the sake of a memory."

"Yes," he replied eagerly, "anything more?"

"I have been thinking about a wedding present I am anxious to send. You might choose a solid gold cigarette case."

"For a man or a woman?"

"A man. The best you can find. I should like it to be a very good one. I can rely on your taste. I wish, Arthur, you were going to be married."

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It was the first time she had ever expressed such a desire, or felt it. She thought suddenly how alone he would be in the world when she went from him. He had never made confidants of his parents, and no woman, save herself, influenced his life.

"I think I am like you, Jane, averse to matrimony. I don't believe I shall marry."

"People say we resemble each other. I hope, for your own sake, you are different to me. My life is no pattern to build upon. It's been merry, but rather meaningless. I know yours will have more depth. You've plenty of time before you, that is the great thing. It is when the time is all behind, one begins to think."

Arthur's hand closed more tightly over hers, with a fervour she understood. She had hinted at the end, and he could not bear the shadow. He rebelled, unable to face the thought of separation.

"I don't like leaving you to-morrow, even for a few hours," he confessed, all his devotion written in his face.

"Oh! you must not mind, you must not really, Arthur. Your mother, too, has a commission I know you will do for her, but promise me one

thing. Go to your Club at three o'clock in the afternoon, and see if there is a telegram from me. I may think of something during the morning I should like brought down, I have such sudden fancies now. The flowers in the gold baskets have amounted almost to a craving."

"Why did you not send for them days ago?"

"Because the wish only came this afternoon."

"Of course I'll go, and shall wait for a wire. Please send me one any way, just to say how you are. I shall start rather early."

"All right. I wonder what London will look like to-morrow."

"Just the same," Arthur said, with conviction.

"I fancy sometimes I hear the distant sounds of streets, the rumble of many vehicles, and the cries of newspaper boys. It would be nice to drive up Piccadilly again, I should like to see the familiar faces in the Park."

The pathos of that wish which could not be gratified, set a dull aching pain gnawing at Arthur's heart-strings.

He sought helplessly for some word of hope or comfort. He had dreams of holding her back from death, of overcoming the terrible fate threatening his beloved Jane.

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There were days in which he could not believe she would be taken from him.

Without her life would be a void. They had done everything together, their very thoughts were in unison. One would speak the words passing in the other's mind. To be divided, meant for him the uprooting of all the world's joys and treasures.

"Go and tell Ethel I'm a very selfish person, sending you to London when you don't want to go," Jane murmured, seeing the misery and confusion her thoughtless words aroused in him. "Who knows, I may see my great, beautiful, cruel city again before long, cruel because of the poverty it holds, but so beautiful for the lucky ones, like ourselves."

He tried to trace sarcasm in her words, but she spoke quite simply.

"The lucky ones!" He went quickly, that she might not see the expression in his eyes.

She watched him go, her whole face vivacious with keen excitement.

So far her plans were working well. She had laid the foundation of to-morrow's adventure. Arthur's consent, the letter written to Mario, then in the morning, escape, and hours of freedom,

"Give me to-morrow," she said, hardly knowing whether she addressed her own frail body, or some higher power.

The "give" was a plea, a prayer, a last wild thirst for the world and life!

She looked round the room, and rose with difficulty, her head dizzy with suppressed excitement.

"This place is a cage," she murmured, "I must find my wings. I have power still, I can talk and move. Will is strength, I am not yet beaten. God! to be free again, to be free!"

She caught up a photograph of Mario, and stood panting by the window, laughing down at the gay *debonnair* face.

CHAPTER VIII

ARTHUR had no choice but to go to London the following day. When Jane asked him, he knew his fate was sealed. He could refuse her nothing now. He explained this very gently to his mother, who complained he had not been willing at first to undertake her commissions, or see to her business.

Jane bade him good-bye cheerfully.

"I feel so much better," she declared, then added jokingly, "I think I shall come with you."

"How I wish you could!"

"I am afraid I should delay you, as I shan't be dressed for another hour, and what a handicap I should be in town, crawling about like a fly which has been trodden upon, and not quite killed. I won't fail to send a telegram, so mind you call for it during the afternoon."

Arthur was not likely to forget. His thoughts were too full of Jane. He had offended many acquaintances lately by ignoring invitations, and neglecting even to answer letters, because his mind was so occupied with one thing. If they wrote of Jane, he replied by return, in perfect

sympathy with their desire for news. But other matters faded to supreme indifference. The tragedy at Hazelhind overshadowed all.

Jane spoke truly in saying she was better on this particularly bright morning. Percy was struck with her vivacity, and mentioned it with pleasure to his wife.

"I can't help thinking, Ethel, the doctors are wrong," he said. "I believe the perfect rest and this good air will soon pull Jane round. She is splendid this morning, less breathless and full of spirits. Frail as she is, to-day she looks almost healthy."

Mrs. Paris shook her head to dispel his cheerful view.

"It's only mental," she answered. "Jane is excited about something. The second post brought her a budget of letters, and I've no doubt some old lover has written to say he's coming to call. She is bracing herself up to receive him."

"Do you think so? I fancy she really feels better."

"No doubt. The power of the mind over the body, as we all know, is immense, and she has an extraordinary amount of vitality, considering her terrible state of health. It's a daily wonder, an hourly miracle."

"She never complains," murmured Percy, "at least not to me."

"Yet no one could possibly be deceived. You have only to look to know her end is near. Whether it will prove as rapid as the doctors prophesy is another matter. She has every chance, no exertion, and her slightest whim gratified."

"I shall ask who she is expecting?" said Percy "Sir William Lambdon came the day before yesterday, so I don't think he would be coming again quite so soon, and to-morrow she tells me the Duke of Darrell lunches here. I heard in town he was awfully cut up about Jane's illness. Some people I met said he was a changed man."

"Of course he was in love with Jane," replied Ethel. "I was expecting to hear of the engagement just when she was taken so ill. That seemed to make it more unfortunate. I always hoped she had waited for something really good, I so wanted her career to end with a brilliant marriage. The Duke writes to her every day, but I think she is bored with his letters. He is rather young and indiscreet, I've no doubt he dwells on her health. Jane would rather escape sympathy, and be made to laugh over some ridiculous joke,"

"Yes, I told her a very funny story yesterday about——"

Percy lapsed into silence. His wife's face was not conducive to the exercise of wit. She showed no interest or desire to hear the story in question.

"It's evident," said Ethel, "that Jane wants us out of the way, for she asked very particularly if we were going for a walk, and at what time. It wasn't a mere casual remark, she waited for the answer with certain anxiety. I told her we had been asked out to lunch, and she begged we would go. I wonder who we shall find in her boudoir on our return! I never ask questions."

No sooner was the house clear of relatives, than Jane sent for her chauffeur, a foreigner named Murrietta.

Lately she had taken short drives in a victoria, with a pair of very quiet horses, the doctors having declared motoring quite impossible in her present weak and breathless condition.

Murrietta looked quite pleased at being summoned, he hoped it meant his mistress was getting well.

He entered her service some years previously, and had a deep respect and affection for Miss Cardigan, regretting the active life, which, in

the past, kept him frequently occupied. He was no lover of leisure, this Murrietta, who proved better than many a guide or map through the continent of Europe.

"I want the big red car to-day," said Jane sweetly. "The glass must be down, oh! and I think the side canvas as well, to shelter me as much as possible. I am going to London."

Murrietta smiled.

"I trust Mademoiselle is better?"

"Very much better, thank you, but not strong enough to drive myself yet. Send this telegram for me."

She wrote on a form as she spoke —

"Wait for me at the Club. Am in London, and shall call for you in the motor on my way home. Jane."

She addressed the message to Arthur Paris, and handed it to Murrietta.

"Let the car be at the door in an hour's time," she said.

The man bowed and withdrew, an expression of satisfaction brightening his face.

Mademoiselle is better, Mademoiselle would soon be well! Were not her cheeks pink as the June roses?

To the horror of both hospital nurse and maid, Jane Cardigan unfolded her plan in the absence of Ethel and Percy.

She wished to be equipped for an impromptu journey to London by motor car. She would listen to no expostulations, her word was law.

In a long white cloak, white cap and veil, she walked slowly—very slowly down-stairs, pausing at every step to husband the little strength at her command.

Such a delicate figure, so ethereal and ghost-like, despite the keen life in her flushed transparent face, that even Murrietta, ignorant as to the gravity of her condition, felt a pang of fear as she appeared on the door-step.

The nurse supporting her clung to a last hope that this mad scheme would be abandoned.

"You must not go, you cannot! You are not fit to bear the shaking of the car."

Jane gave a short laugh.

"You do not know me," she said, "or you would not think I should turn back now."

"Then at least let me come with you."

"No, thanks. I prefer to be alone. I am meeting my nephew."

The men servants were wrapping her up in

rugs. She had entered the back part of the car, where a pile of soft cushions made a cozy seat for the weakly passenger.

She waved her hand to her distressed attendant, noting with sorrow the woman had tears in her eyes.

"Don't mind about me, I shall be all right," Jane said, leaning forward, and putting out her hand.

The nurse sprang on the step for a last word.

"I do not know what I shall say to Mr. and Mrs. Paris when they return and find you gone," she declared distractedly.

"Tell them willful Jane made up her mind, they will understand. Don't grudge me a little pleasure, Nurse. I want to see London again before I die, London and—and somebody else!"

She lowered her eyes, her lip trembling slightly.

"Take this, and wear it as a Mascotte. It may bring you luck."

She drew a ruby and diamond ring from her finger, and pressed it into the nurse's palm.

Jane knew human nature so well. The possession of a jewel had power over the feminine mind. The nurse's thoughts would be diverted into more pleasurable channels.

Murrietta received a sign, and started the car.

The old familiar sound set Jane's heart singing. She watched him spring to his seat, then cast an unregretful glance at her prison, a quaint, delightful country house, from which she parted without regret.

"I don't mind if I never see you again," cried her spirit to Hazelhind, and the wonderful valley. "I mean to go to London if it kills me."

The swift movement of the motor caused her no discomfort. How wrong the doctors had been! It was joy to be flying away once more, entirely independent, escaped from the shackles of invalidism. Speed appealed to her temperament forcibly, she felt safely protected from wind and sun, under the firm roof of the car, with shelter on all sides. She revelled in the thought of escape, of adventure, and joyed, when a cushion slipped to the ground, no hand was by to raise and readjust it.

How surprised Arthur would be, and how glad that she was able to enjoy herself once more. She longed to see his face as she welcomed him, it would wear at first a puzzled expression. He would be frightened for her safety, while he loved her to be there.

Mario must have received her letter upon

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waking in the morning, the letter in which she told him to expect her at his studio.

No doubt he had heard there was no hope for poor Jane Cardigan, and the note bidding him await her without fail would overrule any previous engagement, however pressing.

He, too, would be mystified like Arthur. No one had expected her to break away, and defy the ravages of this miserable illness.

Excitement was working its magic in Jane. She drew upon all the energy remaining in the flickering flame of her life.

Her mind making strong demands, received great concessions. She knew she could do this thing. She was master of herself so far, though she dared not contemplate the subsequent suffering when reaction set in, and exhaustion could no longer be postponed. Wisely she put the idea away, closing her eyes to the picture.

As they drew near London she felt exhilarated. Surely her strength was returning! She was being given a glorious reprieve.

Murrietta knew his way to Monsieur Mario's studio, and they reached the door almost to the moment Jane had stated in her letter. She judged the car's paces well. If no disaster befel them on

the road, she felt sure she could gauge the speed with accuracy, and prided himself upon being up to time.

Mario came to the door himself. He heard a motor draw up, but could hardly believe his eyes when he really saw Jane.

For the last hour he had paced his studio restlessly, convinced she would send a message of regret, doubtful if she even intended coming, when the letter was penned.

He gazed at her long and eagerly with his bright blue eyes, half hidden by their massive fringe of dark lashes. He was dressed with scrupulous care, and wore a button hole. His short, pointed beard had been trimmed that morning, his boots were particularly immaculate.

It was a popular idea in London that Mario's gay, handsome countenance concealed much which was evil beneath its outward attraction. He cared so little for the opinion of others, he would often, for his own secret entertainment, betray a strain of devilry in his careless conversation.

Few knew the real Mario, many judged the false. Only Jane perhaps, with keen insight, realized long since that Mario could be trusted by any woman who had sufficient courage to rely upon his honour.

He caught her hands in his, and held them fast.

"Angel!" he whispered, "angel!"

"Not yet," answered Jane.

Mario winced. He stood on the steps of the car, looking as if he would clasp her in his arms.

She regained the girlish joyful expression which had ever been part of her nature.

"Let me carry you in," he said.

Murrietta's watchful eyes criticised the artist doubtfully.

"Don't be silly," laughed the visitor softly.

"I am not quite so feeble. Give me your arm."

He practically lifted her to the pavement.

"Now," she whispered, "we'll walk slowly down the dear old passage to the dear old room."

One or two pedestrians paused and watched her, attracted by the beauty of that white figure, and the handsome car from which she had alighted. But neither Mario nor Miss Cardigan heeded the curious onlookers. They were wrapt up in each other, mutually glad with the tremulous excitement of reunion.

He guided her to a sofa, the very sofa upon which he had painted her in the full health and vigour of her youth, after the original haymaking picture passed into the possession of a millionaire collector, for one of his country houses.

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Instinctively she posed herself in the familiar attitude.

"My God!" he said, with his quick foreign gesture, "what divine beauty!"

She unwound her veil, and a stray piece of hair floated amongst the chiffon.

Deftly he readjusted the wayward curl, and left a kiss on its bright surface.

"Mario," she whispered, "to-day I pay you the greatest compliment of your life. My last expiring effort is for you."

As the artist listened great tears rolled down his cheeks, reminding her of a dog in pain, his faithful, longing eyes showing such a weight of suffering.

"You have saved my faith in human nature," he replied, "by this action of yours. When you closed your door upon me, when I heard of others visiting Hazelhind and I forbidden, then came the iron to my soul! I could bear much till then, even when they told me 'she will be married with a duke.' But to hear you were ill, and be kept away by your desire, ah! that was the sword, the agony, the shame."

"Yet to-day," she whispered, "I schemed for you. I, a miserable, pampered invalid, too feeble

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to crawl the length of the carriage drive, rose up and gathered courage, for this, my friend, for this!"

She laid her hands in his, and pressed them to his cheek.

"And I," he said, "not believing you would come, stayed in hope and fear, when I was due at Buckingham Palace to paint my royal picture. I sent word I was taken ill, and how true was the excuse! I am sick unto death with longing for you, with sorrow and love."

He spoke passionately.

"You don't forget," he continued, "the old days, how wonderful they were! You would come to sit for me, and spring up just when I was doing my best work, insisting we should waltz together to the strains of an abominable street organ. You all but turned my hair grey, sweet charmer, yet I worshipped every vagary, since it was part of you."

"I am afraid I did worry my poor Monsieur Mario. But I couldn't make you hate me, I tried my best. Then, you remember, we suddenly grew to know each other better. You showed me you could love with such deep fervour, and yet remain a chivalrous friend. I would not die without thanking you."

She looked in his eyes with perfect self-composure.

"Ah! do not talk of death!" he cried, and there were drops of horror on his brow.

"They all say that, my dear Mario, 'do not talk of death!' I keep this secret in my heart, I hide the shadow of my enemy day and night, because every one is too selfish to share his presence with me."

The pitiful words came as a revelation.

So that was the way of it! Surrounded by affection and care, Jane was, after all, alone, alone with her most sacred thoughts, the grief of silent knowledge.

Mario stifled his own emotion. In a moment he was perfect master of himself.

"I will share it," he said.

She pressed his hand fervently.

"Do you recall," she murmured, "telling me once, long ago, you believed in prayer. You were a little hurt with the world, because it took for granted you had no religion. Your friends would not believe you went to church."

"They laughed at the very idea," he answered coldly.

"You were constantly misjudged."

He drew from his pocket a tiny New Testament, which showed much wear.

"See," he said, "this is my companion always. It is with me wherever I go. I have never shown it to any one but you."

She took it from him, and fingered the pages nervously.

"Why didn't you give me one like this? Why didn't you try and influence me, while there was time? I rather despise what is called a deathbed repentance, don't you?"

"Any repentance is better than none. But you have no sins, sweet lady."

"Sins of omission may be worse than sins of commission. The things which haunt me now are the duties I have left undone. It's too late to reform, when my strength has gone. Only consider the energy I've wasted. I might have done so much with my money and influence. I just frittered away my time. I lived like an animal, for the pleasures of the moment, to bask in the sun, and play."

The bitter truth shook her voice. She spoke with passionate regret.

"Nobody knows," she continued, "how utterly broken I am."

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She opened the book at St. Luke's Gospel.

"Listen," she continued excitedly, "'For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.' You see, I was given much, and I threw my chances away. Now, I shall die in my sins!"

Utter hopelessness rang in her tone.

Mario's face paled.

"I cannot let you talk like that, it is not true, your life has done good at least to me, so I, of all men, have the right to contradict you. I have seen heaven in your face! I have been the better for the friendship you bestowed. Are beauty and brightness nothing? Have you not given of these rare gifts right royally, Mademoiselle?"

She held the book to her heart.

"May I keep your little Testament?" she asked. "I should like it buried with me. I might have been a religious woman if somebody had taken me in hand. Nobody cared for my soul; do you know why?"

He shook his head.

"Because I was rich. There has never been a mission to save the souls of such as I. Unfortunately, I was too rich to be saved. Had I been

a frivolous factory girl, whole societies would have been formed to snatch me from evil, and lead me, with tender inducements, in the right path. Good people are so anxious for the future salvation of the poor. Women of fashion, women of fortune, are left to go their own way."

"That is true," murmured Mario, "very true. I have often given a Bible to my impecunious models, with a word of caution. I say, 'read this most beautiful of works and live beautifully, then will your face be worth painting.' They smile at me so surprised! A Bible from the wicked Mario! *Mon Dieu!* what next? They take it back maybe to make joke and laugh, but perhaps, *chère amie*, they read a little when the sickness comes, and say to themselves, 'after all Mario had sense. He knew truth when it came his way, he tried to paint like the Bible.' But I never gave to a fine lady any such gift, I would not dare, though she might need it, Heaven knows!"

"Then I was right?"

"It seems so."

"Poor fine lady! No man cares for her soul," sighed Jane. "Oh! if you knew the wonderful schemes I am always forming now, the 'might have been' schemes, I try to make a bargain

with God. Let me live, and I will do this, and this, and this! But He does not hear, no answer comes. I have been silent too long."

Mario rose, and standing back, surveyed her with a world of emotion in his eyes.

"Glorious woman!" he said, "you fill the room with brightness even in your pain. God will not forget you. Perhaps you were sent as the lily for fragrance and ornament, to make men's hearts gladder. What does the lily do, but reign in beauty? You have fulfilled your mission."

He spoke with such strong conviction, Jane smiled involuntarily. His subtle flattery appealed to her still. She felt soothed by Mario.

"I see you," he continued, "with new eyes to-day, I see your quivering lacerated soul, undergoing the torture of ignorance. You have never truly found yourself, or you would regret nothing, you would know how fair and reasonable that self had really been. You have fought temptation and conquered, is that no moral triumph?"

"A conquest over one's lower nature," replied Jane, "is often merely the result of birth and education. Fine feelings are inherited. In less enlightened surroundings I might have been the lowest of the low. I take no credit, and deserve none."

"Hard to yourself, but ever lenient to others!"

He opened a box of crayons.

"Rest," he said, "and let me make one lightning sketch of your face as I see it to-day, with all the glory in it, of suffering undeserved."

Jane rested her head on the pillows.

"This carries me back," she murmured, guessing he intended, by his sudden action, to change the channel of her regretful thoughts. "I wish I were in my mauve gown again, wearing the Oriental amethyst, and picturing myself on the Academy walls, with that ecstatic thrill of feminine conceit I have outlived. 'The picture of the year!' It was a proud moment for us both, when Mario's 'Jane Cardigan' won itself that title."

The quick impressionist portrait grew swiftly under the artist's hand, he trembled as he worked, hardly able to see for tears.

Jane lay passively watching him. The change from her surroundings at Hazelhind gave her a certain pleasure mingled with sorrow. She felt glad she had come, this last act of friendship had not been wholly selfish.

The face which Mario drew was alive, and yet unearthly. He showed her his work with a sense of fear new to him.

"Have I ever looked like that?" she asked.

"It is," he replied, "a reflection rather than a portrait. It is you."

"But," declared Jane, "this is a face to pray to, the face of a saint."

"I only put here what I saw. It will be my guiding star, I shall kneel to it every night and say, 'God bless your fair spirit, my gracious lady, my beautiful child!'"

She seemed to him like a child, small, helpless, frail, needing comfort.

His heart ached for her.

"I am going," she said softly, "it is time. Help me back to the car."

"But you must have something before you leave. I am frightened for you."

He noted her look of intense fatigue.

"Thank you, no. I have an appointment with Arthur, and cannot stay. It is nearly three o'clock. He will be expecting me at the Club."

Mario still hesitated.

"Give me your arm," she said, almost peremptorily. "I was thinking," she paused, and laughed a little in the old gay way, "I was thinking of poor Monsieur Mario's reputation, if I were taken so ill in his studio that it was im-

possible to leave. What a scandal! How delighted the gossips would be."

Once again she was "the wicked Aunt" making fun of her unconventional ways. Her eyes sparkled with fresh vitality. She moved across the studio to her own surprise without pain or loss of breath.

"You have done me good," she said, not realizing her nerves were strung to their highest pitch. "You are the best medicine. I've been a wretched guest, but you will forgive me, and remember to-day until—until we meet again."

Mario knew her meaning. This was her farewell to him, the last good-bye, which must live in his memory for all time.

"Enfant," he whispered, "I adore you! Never mind the world! God knows that you are good, yes, God and I know that."

He buried his face on her shoulder.

"Give me your blessing," he whispered.

She touched the bent head with her lips.

"Jane's blessing," she replied, "is a smile, *n'est ce pas?*"

The radiant look in her eyes enveloped him. He felt its mystifying brightness as he supported her to the car.

"Let me come with you as far as the Club."

"No, I shall be better alone. I must gather a little strength for Arthur. I have much to say to him."

"But I will not talk."

She waved Monsieur Mario back.

"Adieu," she whispered.

In the past they had always said "au revoir."

"Adieu," he answered brokenly.

Already Murrietta was setting the car in motion.

"Your mistress is very, very ill," the artist warned him, in an undertone, "be careful of her."

The chauffeur touched his cap. He knew Monsieur Mario spoke truly, and answered him in Spanish.

Jane could not catch what they said, but she noticed their faces were grave.

"Murrietta wishes I were accompanying you," Mario told her.

"He had always a kind heart," Jane answered, and smiled as the car moved on.

Mario stood bare-headed on the pavement, watching, watching, long after the motor vanished from sight.

Then he rushed back to the studio, slammed the door violently, and burst into a wild, hysterical fit of sobbing.

CHAPTER IX

ARTHUR stood by the window of his Club in Piccadilly, staring anxiously at the passing traffic. He had remained in that same attitude of nervous tension, ever since receiving Jane's amazing telegram.

It was impossible to believe she could be really in London, that dying woman, subject to daily fits of exhaustion. How would she muster strength for such a proceeding, when the doctors numbered her days, withdrawing all hope?

He remembered Sir William's words that doctors were not always infallible! Might they not have mistaken Jane's case?

Arthur caught at a straw, yet dared not really hope. As he waited, he questioned himself unmercifully.

"What do you honestly believe? What is your true opinion?" He answered involuntarily:—"If she has done this thing, it will kill her. Perhaps she meant it should, there were many ways of committing suicide."

Blocked in the crowded thoroughfare, he caught

sight of a large, red car, which he recognized at once. Snatching up his hat, he hurried out, and signalling to Murrietta, sprang into the vacant seat by Jane.

She welcomed him with a look of gladness.

"Arthur," she whispered, "I am so glad you have come. I thought I might never see you again."

"You are worse!" he said. "Shall we drive to your doctor in Harley Street?"

"No, home, at top speed when we are clear of the traffic. Tell Murrietta."

Arthur leant forward and spoke to the driver.

He was struck by Jane's terrible look of illness. She seemed to him half dead already. He supported her in his arms. They were hidden from view by the drawn canvas.

"I've been to see Mario," she gasped. "I could not ask him to Hazelhind, and I wanted a change so badly. Isn't it wonderful I can talk? My head is quite clear, yet I've no strength at all. You were surprised, Arthur! this is better than returning by train, isn't it? I made the plan last night. I was afraid to tell you, for you would have tried to stop me."

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"I thought it couldn't be true! And you came up alone with Murrietta?"

"Yes. It was quite an adventure. We escaped when your parents were out. I left my nurse weeping at the folly of 'the wicked Aunt.'"

"What have you here?"

He took up the small book Mario had given her.

"A New Testament, Arthur. We lose God in life, and only begin to look for Him in death. When people are very ill they seek and sometimes find Him."

Her nephew listened with an expression of glad surprise. He had often wondered at Jane's silence on such subjects. He liked to think she was turning her mind to religion now when the world's help drifted far away, and only spiritual things mattered.

"I'm a kind of prodigal," she continued, "I have wasted my substance in riotous living. It's no comfort when the end comes, Arthur. I want you to avoid a death of regret. The only good I can do now is to leave my life to you as a warning. Don't follow my example, but redeem my wasted years for me, after I am gone."

"In what way?" he asked breathlessly, trying to follow her thoughts.

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"All my money will be yours. Use it for good, not purely for self. Step out of the common groove."

Again he longed to ask, "In what way?"

She read the question in his eyes.

"Perhaps," she said, "you could do something for people like me. I told Mario I was too rich to be saved. The great community of careless, forgetful, worldly men and women are never sought. How to seek them I do not know. You are clever, Arthur, you will find a way."

He listened utterly bewildered. It seemed she was throwing upon his young shoulders a vast responsibility, the redeeming of the years she had spent in pleasure. His youth fell from him in that hour of perplexity, he felt old for the first time.

"Yes," he answered, "I will find a way. I will not forget your wishes."

The words were simple enough, but they carried conviction, and an earnest desire to give her some inward peace.

"Transitory things, the things I cherished," she whispered, "are nothing. I feel to-day like a freed woman, passing into the freedom of a great love, a great forgiveness. In caring chiefly

for trifles, I lost myself. If I had only looked upwards, I might have found God and myself."

She rambled on. He held her still in his arms. At intervals they were silent, once she murmured she hoped he had not bothered about the flowers, she did not want them now.

He thought of the great gold baskets with beribboned handles, already on their way to Hazelhind, and wondered if those failing eyes would ever see them.

Self-possession of a strong reliable kind came to Arthur during that anxious drive. He felt no fear, though he realized Jane was sinking. He was buoyed up by the look of calm on her face, by the responsibility she threw upon him, the mission she left in his hands. He could think of her only as a freed woman, and something deep down in his heart told him that he, too, was a freed man.

What, after all, had her life been worth, with its gaiety and sunshine? A bubble, leaving no impression behind, no lesson save that of warning, no memorial of work done. He realized he had walked in her footsteps, accomplishing nothing for the good of others, high motives, loyal service, marking no mile-stones on his life's road.

He had been drifting in the aimless conventional routine of pleasure till pain and death said "halt!" and the little figure in his arms drew him up sharply with those convincing words:—"You will find a way!"

Jane knew her life might be counted by moments, as the car rushed through the glad country, and felt it was the very end she would have chosen. The movement, the speed, the open air, Arthur's arms around her, and the hum of the tearing motor, singing like a live thing in her ears.

She spoke at random now, for her mind wandered. "They were journeying to the far corners of the earth," she told Arthur. "He must wait a little and he would see!"

She was calm and happy. The clear day of Eternity shone in her face, things temporal were at an end.

Arthur mustered all his courage to watch the passing of Jane's spirit. He believed in the glorious liberty, the everlasting habitation, the heavenly home of joy. She was nearing that great awakening, that supreme good, that fullness of love, the morning dawn of a new light.

He had less fear for her now than ever since

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the commencement of her illness. It had come, the long dreaded moment of struggle, and behold the call was only a gentle falling into slumber, the sighing of an exhausted child, gladly welcoming sleep.

So the happy butterfly of a life's summer, the bright joyous pilgrim, mysterious, fleeting, precious Jane, drifted from the world she had cherished, beyond human power, to the discipline of the unknown.

Arthur saw in the silent exit of her gentle soul, protection from danger, deliverance from pain, all the highest good for her, all the emptiness and wrench of bereavement for himself.

CHAPTER X

WHEN Jane's voice was silenced and Jane's presence had departed, her last request returned with renewed vigour to Arthur's mind. She had distinctly adjured him to work for God with the great wealth she had passed into his hands. At first, naturally, his thoughts turned to charity, that open sesame for easy gifts, until strange words of hers came ringing back, filling him with perplexity.

She had said, "Step out of the common groove, do something for people like me!"

What could he do for women like Jane, for men like himself? The land was filled with churches, religion invited them on every side, only somehow the majority were not attracted by the opportunities of worship so lavishly offered by a Christian country. Half the churches were empty, the fashionable crowd which thronged Hyde Park on Sunday seldom troubled to first publicly bend the knee, and raise the heart in prayer.

Pleasure outdistanced religion, but where lay the fault? Had the things of the world received at the hands of their promoters greater pains,

more forethought, and diligent attention, than spiritual matters ?

Many places, where the inspired Word was read, could boast but a handful of faithful souls, who attended the dreary services as a kind of penance. Maybe the man of God was old and feeble ! He could not make his voice reach beyond the first few comfortless benches. Yet no one dared say, " You are imparting to the young a distaste for higher things. You are ruining your own cause, you are alienating souls from Christ ! "

At a hall of amusement the senile or incapable would not be tolerated a moment.

Any lack of talent, any falling away of charm, any physical defect, would, on the part of the speakers, form a fatal barrier to future audiences. Arthur realized the best was not given to the Church, yet he saw no way of rectifying the stumbling-blocks on every side.

He was just one man alone, without any particular calling or mission, deeply anxious to step out and do something for the spiritual good of the community, but no answer came to his prayer for guidance, no hand pointed the way, which Jane had prophesied he would surely find.

He consulted the clergy of various denomina-

tions, as to distributing his wealth. Each had in view his own particular charity and neighbourhood, and none suggested anything unusual or original.

He touched on the subject nearest his heart, the way in which the wealthy class neglected church-going and service, but the good men with whom he communed had no light to throw upon the subject.

"It is taken for granted," said one eminent divine, to whom Arthur confided something of Jane Cardigan's feelings before death, "that educated people have been given their chance in youth, and must therefore make a free choice whether they dedicate their lives to God or the devil. You may remember the idea was mooted of a house to house visitation in Belgravia and Mayfair, by the American Revivalists, but was never brought into practice. Our wise friends from across the water learnt that the English householder was not to be molested in that way."

"Yet this same householder sees nothing strange in the fact that his wife or daughters 'district-visit' their poorer neighbours, and try, if possible, to plant some good seed," Arthur replied, with a sense of hopelessness. "Many help

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the poor, none try to save the rich. My Aunt was very impressionable, yet even her clerical friends never spoke to her about her soul. They supposed, no doubt, she had her own reasons for staying away from church, and commended her for the generosity with which she wrote out a check if they so much as hinted that help was needed. That check cost little from her store, she always had more money than she knew what to do with. An easy way to buy redemption, only at the end she knew peace could not be so lightly purchased. Because her soul had been neglected, she died a death of regret. She prayed that her money might, in some way, bring salvation to her own class."

It seemed to the clergyman that young Arthur Paris was a little overwrought and unreasonable since losing his devoted friend and relative. Time would bring him to a more settled frame of mind, and his wild idea of reaching the class which all the missionaries in the world had intentionally or unintentionally neglected, must certainly dwindle. Calmer views would in time replace the agitation from which he most palpably suffered.

Ethel Paris, with all her good works in the East

End of London, could likewise suggest no way of fulfilling that mysterious request of Jane's.

"I dare say she was a little off her head, poor dear! You see, Arthur, she was in the last stages of weakness when she made that strange appeal," said his mother, soothingly.

They were at Windycross, shortly after the funeral, and Arthur felt glad of quiet. No one disturbed them in that house on the hill, he seemed nearer Jane in that solitary retreat.

Mrs. Paris noticed with pleasure her son went to church now on Sunday. He made no particular comment upon the service, which was not enlivening, except to remark that Jane's neglect of it did not surprise him.

The Vicar, a well-meaning and exceedingly religious man, had unfortunately been born without a roof to his mouth. That he should have chosen the clerical profession under the circumstances, was somewhat incomprehensible, for his diction naturally suffered from this physical defect. Having no idea of music, the small choir went their own way untrained, in blissful ignorance of tune or harmony.

The building boasted few comforts. The narrow cramped pews were conducive to much bod-

ily inconvenience during a long sermon, and long sermons were still the fashion in that neighbourhood. Old Kitchen, the gardener, told proudly of the lengthy orations given by their previous Vicar, who had been known to "speak for an hour and half without drawing breath," an item of history Kitchen loved to repeat, when questioned on the subject.

"I wonder Ashburn doesn't try and make his services more attractive," Arthur said suddenly one morning, breaking his long silence.

He was driving with his mother, who had begged him to accompany her, under the plea she felt nervous and overwrought. Percy was away golfing, and Mrs. Paris still suffered from the shock of that tragic day, when the car returned from London laden with its sad burden.

She could not blot from her mind's eye the picture of Arthur and Murrietta bearing the lifeless body of beautiful, reckless Jane through the flowery portal of Hazelhind.

In that moment she realized how deeply she loved the sister whose faults so often jarred on the older woman's sensibilities.

What would she not have given for one last word, one look of recognition from the eyes which

shone so brightly only that morning? But Jane had evaded her in death, as in life. They were never destined to be one.

"More attractive," Mrs. Paris replied, in a tone of surprise. "But what could the poor man do? He conducts the service very reverently, and if the singing is not all that one desires, it is absurd to expect a good choir in a place like this."

"I suppose so! He tells me the congregations are even smaller in the winter, the church is so cold and damp. I have promised him a new heating apparatus, and I think I shall have the gas laid on. Those oil lamps are very tiresome."

"I am sure, Arthur, Mr. Ashburn will be most grateful. He is much touched at your attention since dear Jane's death. He told me he could hardly believe his eyes the first Sunday you came to Church, and that he was so pleased to see you were keeping it up."

"His sermons are a bit of a trial."

"Well, yes, perhaps."

"Religion ought never to be a trial," continued Arthur warmly. "If only the clergy would realize that, there would not be so many empty places."

"We can't hurt the poor man's feelings by asking him to shorten his discourses."

"No, and so the cause suffers. Take, for instance, those Park House schoolgirls. They attend, don't they? I think I have heard you say the school is one of the most exclusive and select in England."

"Certainly, many of the girls are the daughters of the nobility."

"Quite so. They will grow into women whose position naturally gives them a wide sphere of influence. They will be the wealthy women, the women whose luxurious lives are strewn with temptations to indulgence and frivolity. Do you imagine they look forward to their Sunday mornings, or carry away any benefit, any word to ring through the years, any love for God's house? I'm not preaching, for you could hardly call me a religious man, I simply state facts. I noticed those girls last Sunday. Some looked half asleep, others were openly bored, trying to conceal their impatience from the vigilant eyes of the schoolmistress. One, a very pretty girl, had the most extraordinary expression on her face I have ever seen. It was a mixture of reverence and intolerance combined, as if indeed she could hardly endure the surrounding monotony. Her eyes hungered for something better, more satisfy-

ing, but she did not fidget, she sat still as stone, with a thousand emotions flitting over her face."

"Really, Arthur, if you do go to church, you ought not to be looking about, though I have no doubt a pretty girl is a more interesting object than Mr. Ashburn! I am going to Park House now. Lady Stewart asked me if I would see the head mistress, to enquire if she could receive a niece. I could not well refuse."

The carriage turned in at high red gates, beautiful grounds surrounded the mansion which housed the offspring of old English families.

"By the way," continued Mrs. Paris, "I happen to know Mr. Ashburn is writing to ask you to read the lessons next Sunday. Now if you want to improve matters, you might help in that quarter. You have a good voice, and would, I think, read well."

Arthur shrugged his shoulders. His mother stepped out, and asked what he would do.

"I don't care to come in," he said, "but I should like to look at the garden, if they won't mind."

The grounds were most beautifully laid out, and Mrs. Paris replied she felt sure he might stroll round.

"The views are beautiful," she exclaimed,

glancing from right to left. "It's a splendid spot for a school, and what a nice row of tennis courts."

The garden appeared quite deserted. Arthur went slowly and pensively down the winding walks. Suddenly he came across a group of girls seated on a bank, all so intent upon one object that at first they failed to observe the intruder.

Before them stood the girl he had noticed in church, with the intense expression. Her head was thrown slightly back, and the wind played through her dark hair. She was addressing her audience in a clear, musical voice, and with extraordinary vigour and fluency. The manner, the face, the words, conveyed the impression of a skilled, experienced speaker, but the form was that of a willowy, undeveloped girl. There was magnetism about her, which arrested the attention of her listeners, and held them in silence and interest. Arthur felt he could have stood for hours, listening to that voice.

He ventured a step nearer, and a small sharp-faced girl, with a mass of red hair, observed him.

She made a quick signal to the youthful orator, and instantly the words of exhortation were silenced, while embarrassment seized the entire assembly.

"Oh! please don't let me disturb you," said Arthur, raising his hat, and turning to go, but the little red-haired girl darted after him.

"Have you come to see one of us?" she asked breathlessly.

He shook his head.

"No, I was only looking round the garden—I am sorry I broke up your—your meeting."

His manner was so courteous, that the small girl began to feel happy and important.

"It was a service," she explained. "We don't like old Beetle down at the church, so we have a little affair of our own on the sly. Bloom is generally the clergyman, she's so splendid! Did you hear her? It just comes you know, we think the spirit moves her. You see, it's her gift."

The explanation was made with a simple sincerity which touched Arthur.

The scattered assembly hurried away in the opposite direction, evidently ashamed of a stranger having discovered their secret gathering.

The bold young person, who happened to be the youngest member of the school, remained however, quite free from shyness, and ready for conversation.

"A very good gift," said Arthur.

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"I couldn't do it myself," continued the chatty little voice, "I shouldn't know how to string two words together. But Bloom went in the holidays to a big mission at the Albert Hall, the Torrey-Alexander mission. She taught us the Glory Song, and she's pretending to be Dr. Torrey. She is sixteen, and wants to be a missionary. I expect she'll go out to the black people, or try to convert the Chinese, if her father will let her."

"Oh! I hope not!"

Arthur spoke involuntarily. He was not in sympathy with foreign missions.

"Why?" asked the child. "I think it would be great fun."

She was dangling her hat by two pink ribbons, which somehow did not clash with her hair.

"I hope," he said, "you will tell Miss Bloom—what is her other name?"

"Elphinstone."

"Miss Bloom Elphinstone, how sorry I was to prove a disturbing element. You might say I consider myself quite as eligible for conversion as the Chinese or the blacks."

"But you go to church, I've seen you."

The little, sharp, freckled face smiled up at him knowingly.

"And perhaps next Sunday you may hear me," he replied, wondering if he could bring himself to read the lessons.

"Then you are a clergyman, you're going to preach. Oh! I'm so glad! Beetle drives us nearly mad."

"No, I am not a clergyman."

"I thought you didn't look like one."

Voices were heard calling, "Stella, Stella!"

"I'm Stella," the girl explained, and waving her hand, ran away. He watched her out of sight. The long black legs flew over the ground,—such thin, shapeless legs—with the wiry speed of youth.

Arthur went quickly to the house, where he met his mother, with a pleasant elderly woman on the door-step.

Mrs. Paris introduced him to the head mistress.

"I hope you will forgive me," he said, "but I have been talking to one of your pupils, a funny little girl with red hair."

"Stella, she is such a merry child, no shyness about her."

"So I observed. She was telling me of a fellow pupil, Miss Elphinstone. It seems she has a gift for preaching."

"Yes. I am supposed to know nothing about it, but I believe it's really extraordinary. She seems quite inspired at times."

"How interesting," said Mrs. Paris. "A phenomenon!"

"Her father, an Englishman, is in the diplomatic service, her mother, who is dead, was a Roumanian Princess," vouchsafed the guardian of youth. "I believe she dropped her rank on marrying. It is a very romantic story."

Evidently this was all the information they were to hear, for a farewell hand was extended, and good-byes exchanged.

Arthur informed his mother on the way home, he would read the lessons for Mr. Ashburn.

Perhaps he remembered Stella's excited face as she exclaimed:—"Oh! I'm so glad!"

The following Sunday the sleepy little congregation sat up with startled, interested faces, to hear the old familiar passages rendered with a new meaning,—with feeling, with sincerity, with a certain dramatic power, with intelligent intonation, and studied effect.

Mrs. Paris listened proudly. She had persuaded her husband to accompany her, to hear Arthur read.

Percy slept soundly through the sermon, and the girls from Park House cast furtive glances in the direction of young Mr. Paris, glances he was quite oblivious of, though he recalled the unpleasant nickname they gave the preacher.

Arthur was far away from his present surroundings, his thoughts were of Jane,—of Jane always.

The memory of her last words to him echoed ever in his mind, bringing a sense of blindness and failure, a groping after something he could not reach or discern.

He wondered if he were a hypocrite to be seated there, to read God's word in public, to pose as a man of religious views, when clearly he had failed utterly and hopelessly to find the way. Jane could only point a trembling finger from out the past, Jane who had died in his arms—believing, confident, certain of his success!

CHAPTER XI

THE Savoy Restaurant seemed to be smothered in flowers, the tables were a mass of red carnations and yellow roses.

It was the middle of July, and a remarkably brilliant gathering made the supper scene one of animated brightness. Many well known people had dropped in after the theatre, on all sides familiar faces met the Londoner's eye.

The world of Society rubbed shoulders with a more doubtful world. The Countess, the actress, the well-bred woman, the ill-bred woman, the man about town, the stranger from abroad, the Eastern potentate, the latest celebrity in art, literature, or "cause célèbre," mustered under that cosmopolitan roof.

At a small table for two near the window, Sir William Lambdon was seated with Harold Stone. When alone together they often spoke of Jane. The Savoy had been one of her favourite haunts, and the place brought her forcibly to Sir William's mind. He thought involuntarily to-night of that May-day, so short a time ago, when,

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in this very restaurant, he heard the news of her death.

"Arthur Paris is in town," he said, "staying at this hotel. He has been nowhere, socially speaking, since losing Jane. People who didn't know her think him rather obtuse. 'It was only his Aunt,' is a remark I have heard more than once. Only!"

Sir William sighed. He missed his good comrade more and more.

"I should like to see young Paris again. I thought him terribly altered at the funeral. He looked years older than when I spent my last day with Miss Cardigan at Hazelhind."

"Poor fellow! She died in his arms. What pluck she had to the last! Of course she hastened her end, motored herself into another world."

"Why does Arthur Paris come here?"

"He is used to the place. Jane made it her headquarters. I suppose he likes to go where he's known. He wrote he was in town on business, his people are at Windycross."

"What will he do now he has come into his fortune?"

"I have no idea. I heard several rumours which were quite untrue. A society paper in-

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formed the public he had started a racing stable, a nice piece of invention. I rather fancy he is serious minded, and will try for Parliament. His Mother told me Jane had left him some sort of injunction to spend the money in a particular way, but did not seem to know the exact details herself."

Harold Stone looked thoughtful. Since Jane was no more, he felt his interest centred instinctively in her nearest and dearest. Arthur would of course be surrounded with friends. Advisers would not be lacking to counsel him as to the best or worst way of spending his income.

"I shall call on Paris to-morrow," said Harold Stone. "Will he stay here long?"

"I expect to see him to-night, so far I know nothing of his movements. I've sent a message to his rooms to ask him to join us at supper, or at least to come down and speak to me. There's Mario, surrounded as usual by beautiful ladies. He is in his element. What a devil he looks when he laughs."

Harold's eyes followed the direction of Sir William's. He regarded the artist with an expression of repugnance, wondering why Jane liked such a fellow,

"Do you know if Miss Cardigan saw him before she died?"

He put the question suddenly to Sir William.

"Mario?"

"Yes."

Sir William shook his head.

"Wasn't allowed to the house. I know for certain they did not meet. Mrs. Paris wouldn't sanction the friendship. Jane told me he was warned to keep away."

"Yet she left him some valuable old curios in her will, and several splendid paintings."

"She left so many friends special mementos from that wonderful collection," replied Sir William, remembering he and Harold Stone had not been forgotten, "that I do not think Mario could have taken it as a sign he was favoured above others. She had the genius of friendship, which is so rare, and yet so beautiful. It might have been better for some of us individually, if she had not loved so widely."

As he spoke, Harold Stone caught sight of Arthur, wending his way through the maze of tables. His face still kept that strange pallor unnatural to youth. His eyes were far more intense and thoughtful since his trouble. He had also a

look of reliance and resolve, which distinguished him, even in a notable crowd.

He greeted his friend with a charm of manner Harold Stone had hardly expected. The moment he spoke, his face lighted by quick intelligence and sensitive feeling, which proved he had not suffered in vain. Sorrow had undoubtedly taught him the lesson of wider sympathy. Its touch improved rather than marred his personality.

"This is the first time I have been in here to supper," he said, "but I did not like to refuse your kind invitation. I wanted to see you and Mr. Stone."

He glanced round at the fair women, many of whom recognized him with smiles, and welcoming bows. They were Jane's friends, he realized he knew them all through her. It almost seemed she walked beside him still in spirit, so hard was it to dissociate his actions from that constant companion of his past. There is a companionship so close and intimate, that one nature must involuntarily be overshadowed by the character and will of the other. The younger and more pliant is most likely to suffer from this weakening, though pleasant, contagion.

The three men talked briskly as they supped. Sad subjects were avoided. To each the recent scene of a woman's burial lay clearly in the mind's vision, and to speak of her in that gay throng would have appeared to Arthur almost like sacrilege.

Mario observed them, and inclined his head stiffly. Neither Arthur nor his parents allowed the fact to leak out, that Jane's last visit had been to the artist's studio.

Mario, to his credit, guarded the secret well. He hugged the sacred knowledge to his heart with a fierce pleasure, while by his bed hung that vivid sketch of an ethereal face, caught upon the very eve of its flight from life.

In his eyes, the picture lived and breathed a blessing. He could kiss the lips with a thrill of emotional pleasure, and fancy they smiled to him from a world of dreams and tender memory. The face could flush and pale just as the strong imagination of the artist willed. Often it faded in a mist of tears, sometimes it murmured—"Poor Mario!"

These wonderful secret moments, these miracles of the mind, revived in Mario's brain as he glanced across the room at Arthur Paris. Once

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he sat with Jane at that very table, and her brightness had made the whole world glad.

Mario forgot to be amusing. The woman next him looked surprised.

"Thinking of a new picture?" she queried.

He shook his head.

"Then why so pensive, Monsieur Mario? Have you suddenly seen a ghost?"

"Yes," he laughed, and his white teeth gleamed, "the ghost of an old picture——"

"Which did not sell?"

"Exactly, which did not sell."

"Let us raffle it to-night."

The speaker looked round for the assent of her circle.

"A capital idea. And the subject, Mario?"

Their host put the question with genuine intention, and unfeigned interest.

"The eternal feminine," the artist acknowledged.

He was anxious to change the conversation, but feared to show offence. Their words pained him, for they trod unwittingly on holy ground. In such surroundings he felt bound to crush personal feeling, lest some quick eye detected him.

"Your women are not generally failures, you

idealize them. Now for the lottery of the fair unseen! Her price, Mario?"

"Is beyond rubies," he answered lightly, gazing at a ruby and diamond necklace worn by his host's wife.

"Ah! I see, you rate her too highly, that's why she remains on your hands. Give us a private view, we will come to your studio to-morrow."

"To my studio, yes, but you will not find her there," said Mario.

"Is she in the harem?" asked the woman who had first started the subject.

"The harem!" exclaimed two or three voices in chorus.

"Oh! don't you know, Monsieur Mario calls his own private picture gallery the harem. He has sketches of the most celebrated beauties in London, which smile upon him from the walls of his room every morning when he wakes. One, I expect, is that charming Miss Cardigan he painted in mauve, such a sweetly poetical colour. I thought the portrait lovely, I am so sorry to hear she's dead. Pretty people have no right to die young, why can't they leave that to the ugly ones?"

A sudden silence fell. The speaker felt she had

said something awkward. Every one at the table knew of Mario's passion for the lovely Jane, and few dared mention her name in his presence.

"You are right," he said, conscious of the embarrassing pause. "I have her portrait. The very picture you suggest raffling, is a likeness of Miss Cardigan. That is why its price is above rubies. Her nephew is here to-night. Do you see that young fellow with Sir William Lambdon?"

"Yes. What a very interesting face."

"He is not unlike his Aunt. This is the first time I have come across him since her death."

Mario spoke calmly, but his eye betrayed a profound melancholy. All brightness had departed from the supper party, showing the foreigner's influence predominated.

They passed into the lounge for coffee and liquors. Presently Sir William, with his two guests, seated themselves opposite. Arthur Paris avoided looking in Mario's direction again.

It was strange to him to be once more amongst friends, to see the faces of people in his old set quite unchanged, when life for him held such a different aspect.

Sir William Lambdon was evidently doing his

best to cheer his guest, his easy pleasant manner had a magic of its own. The sight of Arthur Paris brought much that was sad to Harold Stone's mind, but he concealed his feelings, and told some interesting stories, which arrested the younger man's attention.

Life was still very much in its beginning for Arthur Paris. He had never tasted the delightful indulgence of love. He admired women, enjoyed their society, and left them as one leaves a good play, amused, interested, possibly impressed, but free to enjoy the next item in the programme of pleasure.

Jane had taught him never to take women seriously, never to give much thought to anything. In this happy carelessness the years slipped by. Not until her dying hour did she arrest him with those burning words, that sure and certain statement :—" You will find a way ! "

Often since her death he asked himself if Jane had really been a contented woman? He, who knew her so well, ought surely to be the best judge, yet the question puzzled him.

There was always the memory of her end, pointing to failure, and the absence of religion only unconsciously felt, until those moments of

poignant regret, when the realization had been brought home to them both.

The world surrounded Arthur Paris most blatantly to-night.

He had come suddenly forth from his unobtrusive mourning, into the full glitter of modern life and movement. It was difficult to realize Jane was not beside him, or would not appear at any moment.

They talked late, the crowd of supper visitors lingering until the lights were lowered.

In the sudden gloom, the flitting forms busy with good-byes, were phantom-like. The dazzling figures of women wrapt in chiffons and laces, the dark coated men, the medley of faces, held something of mystery in the semi-darkness.

The lounge was full now of moving people, making their way to different doors, and Arthur Paris, detaching himself from Sir William and Harold Stone, watched them with a mesmerized sensation. He was conscious of feeling cold, though the heat of the July night had been but a moment since oppressive. He shivered involuntarily.

His companions went in search of hats and overcoats. Arthur Paris did not follow. He was

standing staring before him at one particular corner of the great lounge, which gathered and concentrated all the light.

The rest of the building had disappeared, and in the midst of this radiance, he saw distinctly two figures. One, full of majesty and sweetness, advanced slowly through the moving mass of frivolous humanity, with a halo about His head, with pierced hands outstretched, and a crown of thorns.

The visionary form gazed long and earnestly into the faces of the multitude as they laughed and talked, all unconsciously touching His garment,—their smiling lips illumined by the rays of divine light, shedding the protection of an illimitable Mercy.

In this great shaft of white radiance, clear and distinct stood Jane Cardigan, as delicately pretty, slender, and fair, as in life, her blonde curls floating about her forehead, and upon her face a beseeching expression.

She followed the first figure at a distance, her arms outstretched as if to intercede, her gentle eyes pleading, with a furnace of humiliation in their depths. Yet no corresponding reverence pervaded the men and women on all sides.

The vision of Jane drew closer to Arthur, and the surrounding talk, of light superficial character died away. He could no longer hear the voices near him.

The fashionable throng were now the shadowy transparent portion—the illuminated unearthly forms the real, the actual, the radiantly alive!

Jane spoke no word as she approached, but Arthur understood all. She drew him towards her with an irresistible force, while the dignified image of the Son of God, moved on among His people who knew Him not, looking into their faces with sorrowful eyes.

Thoughtless, careless, votaries of pleasure, for these Jane pleaded, for souls too rich to be saved! She was commending them to Arthur, entreating him to rise up as a missionary to attract not the sordid, the criminal, the drunkard, but the men and women whose lives were as her own, and his, in the thoughtless past.

Irrevocably they became his charge in that miraculous moment of vision, and a whole plan of action flashed through his mind, as if dictated word by word. He had not a doubt Jane's spirit spoke to his soul.

The perplexity, the mystery of the past, faded.

He had not found the way,—she brought it to him, directly, unmistakably, with her own hands.

The glorious face of the Redeemer, passed like a flash from sight. Only Jane's figure hovered in a misty whiteness, with parted emotional lips, and little fluttering hands.

She was just beyond Arthur's reach, yet so near, his eyes ached with the flood of light. He fancied she murmured some pious invocation, but the words drifted upwards, and vanished with her fading face. Some interior force urged him to try and follow, he battled his way through the people, who drew back making a passage for him. Women looked frightened, their companions hurried them away.

One man found Sir William Lambdon.

"Your friend Paris is ill," he said. "He was seen reeling to the door, looking deadly white."

Sir William and Harold Stone went quickly in search of Arthur. They failed to see him, and an attendant informed them he had gone hurriedly out of doors.

As they stood in the vestibule, they came across Mario, bidding good-bye to his host. A look of excitement and mystery on his expressive face attracted Harold Stone's notice.

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He went across, and shook hands.

"Did you see Paris go out?" he queried.

Mario nodded assent, rather abruptly, and turned to leave without a word.

His interrogator detained him by placing a firm hand on his arm.

"What was the matter? Did you—did you notice anything?"

Mario passed a handkerchief over his forehead.

"It's a warm night," he said, ignoring the question.

Harold Stone felt exasperated.

"We heard Paris was ill, but there was certainly nothing the matter when we left him. Sir William is rather worried."

Mario answered shortly :—

"He did not look ill."

"I am glad to hear it."

Harold Stone's genuine tone suddenly arrested the artist's attention. He had been jealous of the manly Colonial during Jane's life. Now he knew any such feeling to be mean and trivial.

"Not ill," he added, "but altered. His face was radiant, I might say almost—transfigured! He spoke to me as he passed, but I doubt if he

knew what he said. There are words which are no words, they mean nothing, *vous comprenez?*”

Harold Stone did not understand, and signified as much.

Mario lowered his voice.

“Arthur Paris had seen something,” the artist admitted.

The Englishman looked sceptical, for Mario’s tone hinted at the supernatural.

“He whispered as he passed,” Mario continued :—“*I have seen her ! I have seen her !*”—yes, that is what Monsieur Paris said, as he dashed out into the night.”

Raising his hat, Mario bowed and left, without vouchsafing any further explanation to the wondering Harold Stone.

CHAPTER XII

ARTHUR PARIS gave no explanation of his disappearance that night, and neither of his friends cared to question him.

When next they saw him he looked extraordinarily happy, and spoke of being very much occupied, having taken rooms in town, which had quite the appearance of an office. His table was strewn with papers, documents, and architect's plans. He was dictating letters to a shorthand secretary when Sir William called on him, and his desk showed a large amount of correspondence.

He turned the subject when Sir William tried to find out why he was so busy, and pushed aside the books of drawings with a smile and shake of the head, on being asked if he were building a country house.

Sir William did not stay long, for Mrs. Paris arrived, and they had never been very great friends. She bore towards him, in a milder form, something of the resentment she felt for Mario. She remembered his constant appearance in foreign places where Jane held her court, wondering a man who had been refused, cared for the society

of one so evidently heartless and insincere. She little guessed how Jane had made her refusal so delicate and elusive, that, without loss of dignity, he could remain at her side, as a constant friend, a faithful companion.

Such situations were almost incomprehensible to Ethel Paris, for whom yea was yea, and nay was nay. She could conceive no compromise, no fine mesh of romance woven into daily life, with the skill of the born coquette. Jane's little affairs, with their lightness of touch, their dainty sympathy and brightening element in life, were to her as crude and revolting as the most vulgar intrigue.

Certainly death cast its glamour over every memory of "the wicked Aunt." Mrs. Paris would fain have persuaded herself now that the departed sister never gave her a moment's anxiety, never violated conventionality, or brought upon herself objectionable criticism.

She liked to speak and think tenderly of Jane, to linger over the paragraphs in regard to her end, "cut off in the flower of her age," "regretted far and wide," "death of a well-known society woman," etc., with pictures of Jane, looking almost terribly lifelike and full of mirth.

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The letters, too, from those who had really loved that sparkling character and generous nature, held such high praise, Ethel began to ask herself if she had been at fault in not appreciating her sister's many qualities sooner.

"Sir William always runs away from me," said Mrs. Paris, as the door closed, and she found herself alone with her son. "I can't think why you've taken these rooms, when we can open out our London house at any moment. There is no reason to remain at Windycross, I can come to town, and make everything comfortable for you."

Arthur begged her to do no such thing. London, he said, was not a place for mourners. The season, still in full swing, could hold no attractions for them. He had plans to make, and work to do, he was better by himself.

Mrs. Paris looked round curiously.

"Your father and I were much puzzled by your letter," she said. "We thought you were only going to the Savoy for a day or two, and would settle up everything with the lawyers. What is this business which has kept you in town?"

"Jane's business," he said.

"But surely that ought to be done by now, at least your father says so. He would have come

with me to-day, but had promised to play in a golf match. Mr. Ashburn has been enquiring for you, he greatly misses your help on Sunday morning."

"Oh! Mr. Ashburn."

Arthur spoke as if recalling things temporarily forgotten. The little country church had so entirely passed from his thoughts, that he remembered it with something of a start.

"Congregations any better?" he asked.

"I fear not. It seems Mr. Ashburn is driving the few remaining people away. Last Sunday he surpassed himself for dullness."

"Supposing," said Arthur, "the little place were so packed that people had to be turned from the doors, wouldn't it be surprising?"

"Very."

"Well, if religion were really loved, really popular (by the way, that's a horrid word to use), all eager, hungry Christians for miles around would attend the services. Mr. Ashburn has not arrested them, that's all. A good preacher can generally be sure of listeners. But how seldom one hears a really stirring sermon. It is a great surprise to the average church-goer, to find himself impressed, to come across words of sufficient

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strength even to live in the mind a day. When I spoke of being here on Jane's business, I did not mean the business you were thinking of."

Mrs. Paris looked surprised. She noticed a brightness and energy about her son, apparent for the first time since his grief. The melancholy, bereaved expression which had pained her so much, no longer clouded his eyes. He was alert, cheerful, and as outwardly merry as when he enjoyed his butterfly life with the gay, pleasure-loving Aunt.

"Tell me, Arthur, has anything happened? You seem quite different, more like your old self. I tried so hard to comfort you, and distract your thoughts at Windycross, but you hardly ever smiled. It almost broke my heart!"

His mother's tone of sympathy touched him. He put his hand in hers.

"Mother, dear, you remember Jane's last injunction to me?"

"About doing something for people like herself?"

"Yes."

"She asked you to step out of the common groove. That was Jane all over. She was never content to be like other people."

"No, she was always herself. That was the

wonderful part about her. It's the most difficult thing in the world to be oneself. We are nearly all replicas of other people."

"Surely," protested Mrs. Paris, "we should at least pay heed to convention. There are certain things one can't do."

"Jane would not have allowed that."

His mother winced a little. She had sufficient sentiment not to wish to lose her temper while discussing the departed.

"I think," she said, "we had better not talk upon subjects over which we are likely to disagree. You grew up impregnated with your Aunt's ideas, and I never tried to keep you from her influence. I always thought you were in reality her salvation, her love for you was the best trait in her character."

"And now," he said, "she is my salvation."

He paused, and moved up and down the room slowly. It was difficult to explain to his mother the plan fixed definitely in his mind. Had he evolved it from his own inner consciousness, he might have feared for its ultimate success. But personally, the idea in no way belonged to him, it was rather dictated, forced upon him by that brilliant figure, in a moment of revelation.

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Should he tell his mother all, unfold to her the coming of Jane in miraculous beauty and almost blinding light? Could he put into words the wonder of Christ's image, moving through that crowded human company, in the vision at the Savoy? Would she ever believe he had seen the Divine Presence, the figure, so pathetic, so stately, so radiant, loving, true, and tender, that the commonest sinner might venture to look into the face of the perfect God, the perfection of man?

From that moment Christ, in the fullness of beauty, had been with Arthur day and night. He saw the figure sleeping, waking, always as he had seen its gentle majesty among the fashionable worldlings. He longed for the moment when Jane's work, controlled, as he believed, by her spirit, would be in action, casting its rays of influence upon callous hearts, bringing to the Saviour a little handful of wandering souls, who, in Jane's lifetime, were too rich to be saved.

Mrs. Paris, looking at Arthur critically, prevented a confidence unwittingly, by the settled frown on her brow. It was not that she felt out of harmony with her son, but she possessed no charm of manner by which revelations of a private and sacred nature are attracted,

"You have heard," he said, "for want of a better word, of people being 'converted.' Conversion savours of religious cant, of hysterical revivalism, or posing hypocrites. If it were easier to describe, I should own, Mother, that since coming to London, I've found something which is only given to few. I'm a changed man, but God grant none of my friends may say I have 'turned religious.' That would be to spoil my chance with the very class I am going to try and attack. They would simply dismiss me from their minds, with a shrug of their shoulders, and perhaps a sigh of regret. There are no truer words than these, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of!'"

Mrs. Paris gazed at him in profound surprise.

"You talk," she said, "as if you had been a heathen before, and ever since the end of May you have regularly attended church. Besides, you were confirmed at Eton."

"Yes," he said, "I was confirmed at Eton."

There was a strange smile on his lips. He became a mystery to his mother. She felt a little awed, he was so far beyond her in thought, in sight, in feeling. She fancied Jane might have

understood his mood, and instinctively longed for the presence of her dead sister.

"It has made you very happy," she murmured, "this—this sudden change you call conversion?"

"I am like the seventy," he replied, "who returned again with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name.'"

She did not know that for him the invisible world existed now. Jane was no longer the still, white figure in a funeral shell, but the responsive, pleading, animated spirit, guiding him from darkness to light, from perplexity to active endeavour.

"Perhaps," suggested his mother, "you will interest yourself in my philanthropic work. I have promised to give away some prizes this afternoon to the 'Church Girls' Brigade.' The attendances at service have shown marked improvement during the past year, and some of the prizes are really handsome. To-morrow there is a Mothers' Tea at the Clergy House, I shall stay in town for that. I supply the buns, you know, and Lady Stewart gives meat pies."

"Only see," said Arthur, "how you tempt the poor to go to church, that they may hear good words, and possibly be the better! Prizes for the girls, buns for the mothers, all kinds of benefits,

to draw them to God. The rich are never tempted to attend a place of worship, never sought or induced. You can't give them buns and prizes, but you can, if you take the trouble, excite their interest and curiosity. They could certainly be reached, if time, trouble, thought, and money were expended in the cause. Jane asked me to spend her fortune in trying to save the rich, a mission which has never been attempted before, though many have helped the poor and ignorant."

"But what will you do? What can you do?"

"I have my plans already under weigh," he answered. "I am going to build a place, a beautiful place, for an original form of service. It will be fitted with every luxury, I shall make it, if possible, a perfect Temple of art. In Jane Cardigan's temple, the enlightened art of man will be used in the service of God. There will be no copying from the dark middle ages, no grotesque pictures of saints with stiff halos, nothing dreary, depressing, or uncomfortable. There the glory of modern civilization will appeal to the cultured, if perhaps luxurious life of the congregation. The Salvation Army has successfully attracted a class, with its cymbals, drums,

and uniforms. Another class will now be sought in a very different manner."

Mrs. Paris stared at her son as if he had suddenly taken leave of his senses.

"You—you are going to hold services in London?" she gasped.

"Exactly, such services as you have never seen or dreamt of. The cult of happiness will be preached. God in everything, in joys and pleasures, the God who surely loves the rich man dearly, to give him such a lavish store of the world's treasures."

"But, Arthur, you must be mad!" exclaimed Mrs. Paris, hotly. "London has its Westminster Abbey, its St. Paul's Cathedral, its host of fashionable, stately Churches——"

"But this will not be at all like Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's Cathedral, and it will attract a congregation who never attend those services. For instance, you do not find luxurious arm-chairs there. If you want a comfortable seat you take a stall at a theatre, you don't expect your ease to be considered in the Abbey stalls."

"I can't imagine what you are going to do, it's all quite incomprehensible."

"Better not try to imagine it, Mother, dear,

just wait and see. Don't form an opinion till the thing is working, and you are in a position to judge. I won't disturb you any more with my plans, I only wish to explain that I shall be very busy throughout the year. I hope to open early next season, I am going abroad for some of my decorations."

Womanlike Mrs. Paris asked many more questions, but Arthur evaded them with elusive replies. He reminded her of the prize-giving, and seeing she had no time to spare, she hurried away ill at ease, and much troubled in her mind.

"I fear," she said to herself, "my poor sister's death has had a bad effect on Arthur's brain. Still, what can I do? The money is his to squander as he pleases, and, of course, he thinks he is carrying out her wishes. 'Jane Cardigan's temple!' Who ever heard of such a thing? It's grotesque and absurd, I am not sure it isn't a little blasphemous. Jane Cardigan's temple indeed!"

Thus spoke the stereotyped mind of the woman lacking imagination.

She forgot to be thankful for the look of joy on her son's face, for the widened sympathy shown in this sudden expanding of his intellect and energy, forgot even to thank God for the awakening of his soul.

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Some people are born stupid, others are made so by environment and education, but Ethel Paris obviously cultivated stupidity, by avoiding people of original views and unconventional opinions. It seemed the fates were playing a trick with her when they gave her such a sister as Jane, such a son as Arthur.

A Philistine to her finger tips, the sister of this strange woman, the mother of this strange man, had never risen above the enormous importance of the commonplace.

Arthur's resolve remained in her mind as a very dangerous idea, one which might lead to ridicule and failure. She hardly dared speak of it to her husband, and was surprised at the casual manner in which Percy received the news.

"I hope it will cheer him up, poor fellow," remarked his Father, good-humouredly. "It was perfectly awful the way he missed Jane."

CHAPTER XIII

ARTHUR PARIS not only worked hard at his new scheme, but threw off all traces of mourning, and entered diligently into society. He made it a business to keep in with all the old set, and Jane's friends were delighted to find he was not deserting them.

He told the world nothing of the surprise he was preparing, and Society, knowing he had inherited his Aunt's fortune, took it for granted he would remain a pleasure-seeker at large.

His journey abroad seemed something of a mystery. It was generally believed he was buying curios to add to the wonderful collection left him by Jane Cardigan.

On his return he dined out more than ever, and daily increased his large acquaintance by mixing freely with his fellow men. He certainly carried on Jane's genius for friendship, and was perhaps one of the most popular and sought after young men about town.

Mrs. Paris followed her son's tactics in silent surprise. Was he forgetting that strange resolve, anent the work Jane's dying words in-

spired? Apparently not, for building operations and plans for the lavish adornment of this unusual place of worship were marching apace. Large sums of money had already been expended, and Arthur's rooms in St. James' Street resembled more than ever the office of a business man.

One thing was certain, in all his life Arthur Paris had never looked so happy.

He had begun, for the first time, to live entirely outside himself and his own interests. Every thought centred in the cause. For the sake of this, he frequented houses where the perpetual round of entertaining would have palled under other circumstances. Now he realized these were the people he must reach, and to do so he should bind them to him with the bonds of friendship.

He liked to fancy still that Jane's spirit hovered near, as vividly as in the great moment of vision, which revived his whole life. He no longer felt a sense of loss, for it seemed they worked together, will with will, hand in hand.

It troubled him a little at times to remember he unwittingly made a confidant of Mario on the night of that wonderful revelation. He remembered clearly the artist's face peering into his own, so eager, enquiring, and moved, that it

drew forth the admission, "I have seen her! I have seen her!"

Each was thinking at the moment strongly of one bright personality, no need to mention the dear, familiar name.

Mario must have seen the profound emotion in Arthur's face, must have understood, with the quick sympathy of the artistic temperament, all those stammered words conveyed. Possibly he discovered, even before the younger man spoke, that in the artificial atmosphere of a fashionable restaurant, the simplicity of Truth, the powers of the world to come, the unseen communion of saints, swept down upon a mourning soul, to gladden, to console, to resurrect, to light, expand, save!

Tenderness and sympathy awoke in the artist's seeking eyes as they followed Arthur's vanishing form, for Mario, without hypocrisy, could make his heart everything to every one.

That same night he knelt before Jane's picture, and the painting of a face highly coloured with the keen sensations of earth-life, but interwoven with freedom of soul, seemed breathing grand and comforting thoughts.

"Could Arthur have seen her more clearly?" Mario questioned. The painting he fancied

moved with a strange vibration. By his own genius, he had kept Jane before him in a spiritualized form, yet with the passionate sorrow of parting in her eyes, a forerunner of pre-devachanic unconsciousness. No empty phantom, this subtle, sensitive, responsive face. For Mario, it had, through the transference of his own emotions, the power to feel, to enjoy, to desire, to suffer.

He knew that no temptation on earth, however great, no plea, however strong, could wrest this painting from him. If he could barter it for a king's ransom, he would not live a day without its mystic companionship. No friend of Jane's, no fellow artist, not even Arthur, her dearest and nearest, had been allowed a sight of this precious face. Mario guarded it with selfish devotion. It held the most intense expression of his artistic and moral career. There was something of religion in it; to flaunt its presence would have seemed like praying aloud in the street, or reading a Bible in Hyde Park. He clothed it with fancies of a wildly romantic nature. It was, in fact, to him, what the vision had been to Arthur, a stimulus, an existence apart, a perpetual well of joy, a controlling energy, a great life-reservoir for the purifying of all contaminating thought.

He wondered if Jane had passed death's gateway for the last time, or if the fair spirit, escaped from its earthly dwelling, would again enter fleshly form, before reaching the Eternal Lights.

He had no real belief in Re-incarnation, but there was much of the dreamy, mystical East in Mario's nature. When alone, he meditated deeply, seeking to escape the thralldom of the senses. He liked to imagine, for the pure love of romance, that in some past earth-life he and Jane were one, and that his affection for her had its roots in eternity. He used to say their "egos" were drawn instinctively to each other on the strength of previous associations. Together they had dwelt in Devachan, the world of spiritual, pure, and lofty effects, for ten to fifteen centuries, till their souls were again reborn on earth. The thought had pleased Jane immensely, she declared she liked to imagine they were such old friends.

Mario tried to see Arthur Paris alone after that eventful night at the Savoy, but never succeeded. Perhaps Jane's nephew desired no such interview. So the artist continued alone his silent communication with the pictured face, receiving no explanation of those mysterious words, "I have seen her! I have seen her!"

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It was winter, the time when Mario shivered continually, and sighed for the roses and carnations of the Riviera. His studio was a hot house for exotics, yet he sat before the furnace filling the big old-fashioned grate, wrapped in furs, his figure sunk deep in an armchair. Beneath the sable-lined overcoat he wore evening dress.

The dimly lighted room, with its luxurious furniture and artistic decorations, soothed Mario and helped him to forget the raw, foggy atmosphere outside.

He was to dine at Lady Stewart's, and remembered with a pang that she was seldom generous in the quantity of coal expended on her meagre fires. The grates were made to hold as small a quantity as possible, without absolutely violating the laws of hospitality. He eyed his own huge log, licked by blue and golden flame, regretfully. It was joy to sit in solitary contentment, roasting his tired body before this wealth of warmth and brightness. Despite a dull, colourless day, he had worked hard, disregarding an unfavourable light, and making his canvas glow with the sunshine of his own soul.

Mario's temperament fought for brightness in the face of mental depression. One moment he

would shake his fist in a passion of wrath at the ugly grey of the street outside, and a second later stand enraptured, watching the picturesque beauty of a heavy rainfall. The dull road, in the twinkling of an eye, changed to silver, the pavement danced with life, as the animated drops beat upon its bitter cold heart, and revived by the poetry of Nature's tears and Nature's cleansing, he returned refreshed to his easel.

Lady Stewart's dinner parties were generally rather sleepy affairs. She had no gaiety of touch. The food and silver were alike ponderous. Still she was influential, and Mario always remembered his patrons of less affluent days. Women who had bought his pictures before he became a celebrity could generally secure him for social functions, which his fastidious taste would not allow him to enjoy. Yet when Mario exchanged the embracing warmth of his studio for the portals of Lady Stewart's glacial mansion, he entered with the merriment of one who loved nothing better than a cool airy room in mid December.

Arthur Paris was there already. Mario never saw him now without a certain feeling of shock. He seemed more and more a part of Jane, a link with a sweet memory, a mystery which brought

both pain and pleasure to the sensitive artist. He had not failed to observe within the last six months his friend's increased mental development. Arthur was as one who had suddenly become aware of his own powers. He seemed to carry with him a growing and exhaustless force, some subtle influence, which gave him a hearing in the presence of great minds, making him tactful and discerning in the congregation of fools. He knew well that no success could be gained without enlisting the assistance and co-operation of other people, he knew also it was a special talent to select the right people. He had been seeking of late the leaders of thought in the religious world, the brains of those who represented the Church militant. Far and wide he travelled in search of knowledge to help his coming project. He talked little of his investigations, except to a favoured few who shared his confidence.

He took Lady Stewart's sister in to dinner, Mrs. Corbett, who remained true to the family eyes with their perpetual slumbrous droop, but was brisker of conversation, and knew how to dress. She liked Arthur Paris, having met him frequently in Society, and thought herself lucky to be next such a pleasant companion.

"I wish I could see your mother," she said "to thank her for the kindness she has shown my daughter. Effie went this autumn to Park House, a school close to your country place, and my sister mentioned the fact to Mrs. Paris, who was good enough to call on the head-mistress. Effie wrote in high excitement she had been invited to spend Saturday afternoon at Windycross. Then she told of drives taken with her new found friend, it was all a great delight to the child."

"My mother is very fond of girls," replied Arthur, "I am sure it was also a pleasure to her. How does your daughter like Park House?"

"Very much. Certainly modern schools provide all kinds of amusements and interests which were not dreamed of in my youth."

"The world improves."

"So it seems."

"I wonder," he said, "if she has ever mentioned a schoolfellow of hers named Bloom Elphinstone."

"Yes, indeed, and from what I heard I was most curious to see her. I asked Effie to bring her to stay with us for the Christmas holidays. They arrived this afternoon. Bloom Elphinstone was glad to come, as her Father is abroad. She

is quite lovely, I think, and a good deal older than Effie. In Effie's eyes she's simply perfection."

"It's most strange she should be staying with you," declared Arthur, not concealing his excitement at the news. "I particularly want to meet Miss Elphinstone, and feel sure you will help me. May I come to tea one afternoon while she is with you?"

The desire was so open, the request so candid, that Mrs. Corbett looked curiously at the eager face of the young man. He knew the prettiest women in London, was run after by Society mothers, who considered him one of the best "partis" in the matrimonial market, yet a note of pleading rang in his voice as he asked Mrs. Corbett's assistance.

"Why, of course," she said, "I shall be delighted."

Her tone conveyed amusement and surprise. There was a certain good-humoured raillery in her eyes, which appeared less sleepy when laughter lurked behind their heavy lids.

"A mere schoolgirl!" she was thinking. "How funny one so young should take his fancy, when he's considered distinctly difficult to please."

"Thank you," replied Arthur warmly. "I shall be very grateful."

Mrs. Corbett felt puzzled. His manner conveyed the desire that he wished to meet Bloom Elphinstone for some special reason, yet no idea, save sentiment, presented itself by way of explanation to the mind of the older woman.

"I suppose you have seen her," said Mrs. Corbett, "probably when you were at Windycross. It's a remarkable face, quite apart from beauty."

"Yes. I heard she had a power which is rather unusual in women, the gift of oratory. Have you noticed what an extraordinarily spiritual face it is? There's something so pure, so intense about it, at times she looks almost unearthly. I watched her once in church——"

He paused, for Mrs. Corbett could not refrain from smiling, which gave him a sudden clue to her suspicions.

"Go on," she said, with a shake of her head, intended to be winning. "You watched her in church——"

He controlled his momentary annoyance. What did it matter if this woman misunderstood his interest in the girl? All he cared for was the lucky chance given into his hands of making Bloom Elphinstone's acquaintance.

"And thought her attitude both striking and unusual," he continued. "Her face expressed

her feelings, it was actually the mirror to her mind. I remember hoping involuntarily that future contact with the world would not change it to a mask."

"A telltale face is not always a blessing, and might be very much the reverse in Society."

"Then let us hope Miss Elphinstone will not go into Society."

"But she is sure to. Her grandmother presents her next season. Effie says Bloom is very religious, and would rather be a nun, or a missionary, or something absurd. We will soon laugh her out of that. There must be an odd strain about the girl, for she used to preach to her schoolfellows at Park House. They were all so struck with her power, and impressed by the secret services she organized in the garden during play hours, that a wave of religion swept over the school, a sort of revival. Effie says the girls really looked upon her as a saint. I don't like the idea myself, it seems a little unnatural, in fact, almost uncanny."

Arthur remembered his Mother calling her a phenomenon when the head-mistress of Park House told them much the same story.

"Miss Elphinstone certainly looks inspired when she preaches," he declared. "I saw her once for a few moments only, holding one of her

meetings in a shady retreat, with rows of enthralled schoolgirls watching her. My presence caused a great disturbance, the whole congregation fled, headed by the preacher. I never felt so ashamed of myself in all my life. I might have been the Evil One, and the youngest girl in the school alone remained to console me, and say it didn't matter."

"But what were you doing at a girls' school?"

Mrs. Corbett looked sly again, her interest in Arthur and his supposed love-affair momentarily increased. She felt quite sure it was a case of love at first sight.

"I was waiting outside," he replied, "as Lady Stewart had asked Mother to call about her niece."

"That was my Effie. Dear me, how strange! And it proved quite an eventful day. You must lunch with us to-morrow. Bloom is leaving school at Easter."

Arthur gladly accepted the invitation, and for the rest of the dinner found it difficult to escape the subject of Bloom, which Mrs. Corbett pursued in a manner which would have jarred terribly had it not been meant kindly.

He tried to avoid her afterwards, and talked with other friends.

"I thought you were going back to Australia,"

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said Mrs. Corbett to Harold Stone. "I understood it was your home."

"I have no home," he replied, a little sadly.

"Ah! that is because you are a bachelor, you ought to be taxed. I've no patience with nice men who remain unmarried. Why don't you settle down?"

Harold Stone found the question difficult, and made some lame retort about nobody caring to take him.

"Still," she added, "I am very glad you are staying on in England. How do you pass your time?"

He smiled mysteriously.

"Oh! I find plenty to do. I am a great deal with Arthur Paris."

"A very good companion for him, I feel sure. He has no business, so I suppose you amuse yourselves together."

"Yes, we amuse ourselves together."

He did not tell her that Arthur Paris and a certain scheme, alone kept him in England, when he should long since have travelled back to his work across the seas.

The two men left the house together. As they drove away Arthur looked elated.

"Such a piece of good fortune," he said, "I am

to meet that girl, Bloom Elphinstone, to-morrow. I have been wondering for some time how I could get to know her. Now it is all made easy. I certainly seem to be helped and guided."

Harold Stone showed pleasure at the news.

"I was going to write to-night to a friend of her father's, and ask for an introduction," he replied. "Now I need not trouble."

"You are always doing something to further the cause," declared Arthur, gratefully. "Can you spare me some time next week? I have a lot to do, and shall be glad of your advice, only often I fear I tax your friendship too much."

"That would be impossible. Is not our work in memory of her?"

To be doing something for Jane made the hardest task seem light and welcome.

Mario, after bidding his hostess a shivering good-bye, determined to walk home for the sake of his petrified circulation. The fog having cleared, a few wintry stars shone down, in the cold glory of a Christmas sky.

What a season of revel the Yuletide had been only last year! Mario recalled, with a pang, Jane Cardigan's large house party.

Then all was merriment, laughter and music,

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the music of song, of speech, of good fellowship, mingling with the soft strains of violins. This year Mario would accept no invitations, he meant to spend Christmas day quietly alone, in memoriam.

The anniversary should be dedicated to that friend, whose departing brought his gay spirit in touch with the voiceless world of pain. He wondered if Arthur could really be as happy as he looked.

After all, Arthur was young, and youth's elasticity in surmounting grief proved the wonder of older minds.

"Yet we may all be actors together," Mario murmured. "His heart is sealed to me, as mine to him. Perhaps we shall never know!"

The artist sighed. He yearned for a better knowledge of the man Jane had loved, and passed the shadows of homeless, penniless waifs huddled under cold archways, without seeing their misery. His own loss stalked him, ghost-like. He was blind to everything but memory, and the white stars.

The chill of the night proved the very keynote of the frost within his soul. Aloud he quoted with a ray of hope:—

"When summer comes again,—have trust,
All will be bright, and beautiful, and well."

CHAPTER XIV

THE meeting between Bloom Elphinstone and Arthur Paris was rather a disappointment to Mrs. Corbett. They talked a great deal, but the older woman, watching the man closely, could see none of those signs of sudden love she had hoped to trace in his look and manner.

She noticed that Bloom gave him her address before parting, while much of their conversation took place in a confidential undertone, when Mrs. Corbett and Effie were entertaining other friends.

Bloom praised him very genuinely after he left, but gave no clue to the conversation, which had evidently interested her greatly.

The girls returned to school, and Effie wrote that Bloom Elphinstone was often invited to Windycross to meet Arthur Paris. They were certainly great friends. Mrs. Corbett kept her own counsel, and remained mystified. With the coming of spring, strange rumours were afloat in regard to Arthur Paris and a certain building he was erecting in South Kensington.

Some people said it was a lecture hall ; others,

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having heard it called a "Temple of Art," believed he was making a collection of valuable paintings to present to the nation in memory of Jane Cardigan.

When questioned on the subject, he always managed to give an indefinite reply.

"I am going to try and do something that has never been done before," he would say. "I can't tell you about it yet, but I shall send you tickets for the opening."

His interrogators asked if he intended holding theatrical performances, or concerts, at which he smiled, and shook his head. Everything they suggested "had been done before." Who was this man, to have invented something new under the sun? Was he not just a Society butterfly, as this Aunt had been? The question set discerning minds thinking deeply. No, Arthur Paris was different to Jane Cardigan. His influence was always for good, he never trifled with the affections of others, never left hearts aching and eyes dim for the sake of conquest's sensational thrill.

Though he made no parade of his faith, it became gradually known by his life and conduct, that Arthur Paris was a religious man. Mario

guessed instinctively the change had come on that unexplained night at the Savoy.

He remembered the look on Arthur's face, an expression to leave its influence on a career, to mark out for the coming days and years a course of action differing from the past. So Mario likewise awaited the coming of early summer curiously, and speculated with the rest upon the probabilities and improbabilities of Arthur's conduct.

"He has something in store for London," Mario would say, when Jane's nephew was mentioned, "but what it can be nobody knows. He is clever, that young man, to keep up a mystery so long."

Later on a rumour spread that Arthur Paris was going to "run a Revival" on his own account! His mother had all but acknowledged the fact at a dinner party. A very persistent questioner drew out the halting admission from Mrs. Paris, who seemed rather ashamed of her son's preparations, which she termed a "craze and a fad."

"I think it will be most delightful," declared a young Society woman to Mario. "It's a mission to the smart set to put down bridge and all

that. I shall certainly make up a party and go. If it's in the evening, we could have a merry little supper after. He is a dear boy, and has such strange mystical eyes."

She was smoking in the lounge of her Club. Mario had been lunching with her *tête-à-tête*.

"Certainly," he replied, "I would advise you to sample the mission, Madame, for I have the idea you do not go to church."

She nodded her head assentingly.

"Oh! I am too lazy. One is always out so late at night, and it's difficult to be up on Sunday morning. It is as much as I can do to get to the Park by one o'clock. But, of course, every one will go to this affair of Arthur's, he is so popular, and then we are all desperately curious to know what he is going to do. Will he preach to us himself? I can't imagine it, can you?"

The little lady laughed softly as she sipped her coffee.

Mario's face wore a critical expression, he looked slightly impatient.

"I think," he murmured, "there is room for such a mission."

"For people like me," added his companion quickly, with a flash of her bright eyes,

"I did not say that, Madame."

"No, but I said it, which saved you the trouble."

"Perhaps I was selfishly considering my own soul," he murmured, anxious not to betray his real thoughts.

"No, I am sure you were thinking of me. You know you are past redemption."

"Do not be so hard on the wicked Mario."

His tone became tender from habit, he always spoke caressingly to women when they were pretty.

His better nature warned him that her young life was merely an obnoxious weed in the flower garden of the world. To pluck such a brand from the burning, Arthur Paris might well scheme to attract Mrs. Vincent, and the set in which she moved, spurring them to higher ambitions, to a more prayerful life.

Mario realized if the task were given into his own hands, how utterly incapable he would be of even imagining a course of action. For this very reason he marvelled at Arthur Paris, with a sense of admiring surprise and increasing curiosity.

For a man in Society, who had not taken Holy Orders, to try and convert his intimate friends in a novel, unorthodox fashion, showed courage and strong character.

"It is to be called 'Jane Cardigan's Temple,'" continued the musical voice, a mixture of mirth and satire.

White teeth gleaming behind a soft cloud of cigarette smoke, made Mrs. Vincent like a bizarre French picture.

Mario started. This was news to him, and his heart beat suddenly faster.

"Poor little Jane!" continued the woman of the world, in almost pitying accents. "I should think she would turn in her grave if she knew."

"Perhaps she does know, and is glad."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Vincent, shrugging her shoulders. "It may amuse us if a courageous friend defies convention, and perhaps makes a fool of himself, but it wouldn't have pleased Jane to see her name linked to a religious business."

"On the contrary, I heard it was at the express wish of his Aunt that Monsieur Paris is going to hold a mission for those who neglect the conventional places of worship. If I am not mistaken, the opening of this Temple will be one of the sensations of the season. I cannot pretend to guess what he has in store for us, but I have the fancy we will not be disappointed. Awaken curiosity

and you instantly pin Society. Only observe, Society is already pricking up the ears and asking questions. Once let these people, who so love novelty, scent mystery, *et vous verrez*, they sniff, they seek, enquire, and are all eager for the little piece of news which grows always in the telling."

"You are not far wrong, Monsieur Mario, but you may warn my dear Arthur, people like me take a lot of converting."

"All the more praise to him that he sets himself so difficult a task."

"I wonder you are not jealous. You know, I have quite a penchant for that boy. He seems a boy to me, because of his fresh glad manner, so full of youth's vigour and daring."

"Jealous! ah! no, for he is the friend of your soul, while I, the poor artist, claim but to be the admirer of your fair form, which shows to me the charming fashions of the season."

It was second nature to Mario, this systematic paying of compliments. An intense admirer of beauty, he always offered it a certain amount of homage. One woman alone had touched the note of sincerity in his heart, the woman who had crept to him in her dying hour to acknowledge the tragic truth, "I was too rich to be saved!"

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Mrs. Vincent's whole appearance bespoke riches. She was clad in costly array, jewels flashed among her laces, and made sunlight on her fingers, yet Arthur Paris was not afraid to seek her soul, and such as she. The attempt, by its very boldness, carried exhilaration to Mario.

He rose, for his time was limited. He had work to do, and snatched an hour for recreation with difficulty.

"So soon," she murmured.

"Alas! I am a slave, and you the Queen of Leisure. I must beg the Queen to excuse me."

"Not willingly," she replied, extending her hand, "but with pain and regret."

"Madame embarrasses me with her kindness." He bowed low in his usual theatrical manner. It savoured of romance, recalling the days of patches and powder.

"I will come with you," she said, "and drive you back to your studio."

Women always made much of Mario. They enjoyed his society.

In the hall of the Club Mrs. Vincent was handed some letters. She opened them in the carriage. One contained two tickets, "with the compliments of Arthur Paris."

"For the opening service of Jane Cardigan's Temple!" gasped Mrs. Vincent, really astonished. "I thought it was all humbug, I never honestly believed ——"

She broke off with a speechless gasp of most genuine amazement.

Mario examined the tickets. He fancied he could hear Jane's voice and see her tender smile. The touch of the tickets thrilled him, he remained a moment in silent thought and almost painful reverie.

"You will go?" he murmured at last.

"I would not miss it for the world. And you?"

"I would not miss it for Heaven," he answered, adding internally, "since it is in memory of Jane."

He found on his return a similar envelope awaiting him. The tickets had gone forth to the world of pleasure.

CHAPTER XV

IT was the day before the opening of Jane Cardigan's Temple. Her world, meeting together at a political crush in one of the great houses of London, chatted gaily and curiously of to-morrow's novelty. Every one seemed going the following evening to the "Arthur Paris Revival."

"The building itself will be worth seeing," said a celebrated sculptor who had come with Mario. "I hear he has some carving there which rivals Gibbons' choir stalls in St. Paul's, and the organ case of St. Stephen's, Walbrook."

"No one has been allowed to peep, the doors are religiously guarded," Mario replied. "Treasures from all parts of the world have arrived, big crates marked 'stained glass, with the greatest care,' crates of marble and bronze figures shrouded in cloths like caged ghosts, wrought iron grilles, fashioned so cunningly, I am told, that you cannot believe they are iron at all, inlaid mahogany panelling, and luxurious armchairs, of a shape never before seen in a church. What a

sensation ! Mon Dieu ! Worthy of her, worthy of Jane Cardigan."

A strange expression lighted Mario's face, his eyes scintillated with a mysterious rapture. He seldom mentioned that name in public, but to-night he lingered upon it, as if unconscious of his surroundings.

"I'm dying to see a screen of metal work, which, I believe, is simply exquisite," said Mrs. Vincent, who had paused to listen while Mario spoke. "The piers are of oxidized silver, round which climb plants in delicate silver, passion flowers inlaid with mother of pearl, convolvulus enamelled with transparent purple, blue and pink, nasturtiums glowing a brilliant red and yellow, the whole a mass of dazzling colour, so elaborate in execution, and restrained in design, as to satisfy the most fastidious critic."

"It seems," said the sculptor, "if no one has been allowed to peep, the general public are nevertheless well informed of the beauties in store."

"Certainly not !" broke in Mrs. Vincent. "It has all been kept as dark as possible. You surely don't call us the 'general public.' Monsieur Mario and I are special friends, and take a very deep interest in Arthur Paris. I do not

mind confessing, I have quite lost my heart to him, and if he gets up and preaches at me, I don't know what I shall do. He's such a dear!"

"Perhaps, Madame, you will be converted," suggested Mario, with a gravity she believed feigned.

"Well, I can't answer for myself, anything might happen. Then you have heard, of course, the music will be of the kind which sends delirious little shivers of joy down your spine. A musician told me yesterday Arthur has procured one of the finest organs in the world."

"Your musical friend, was he the 'general public'?" asked the sculptor, with a smile which veiled a sneer.

"No. He had been giving his advice. That's where Arthur Paris shows his sense. When he started building his Temple he didn't think he knew everything himself. He requisitioned the brains of artists, musicians, poets, and on the opening of his mission, he will gather round him the great preachers of the day, the leaders of religious thought, the men we want to hear, because they are interesting, earnest, intense."

Mario could hardly believe this was the frivolous Mrs. Vincent, speaking with so much excite-

ment on a religious event. The mere anticipation of Arthur's venture had already raised her mind above its usual environment. She had caught something of her young friend's enthusiasm, possibly merely because, as she said, "he was such a dear!" Women of her stamp loved to flatter and spoil good-looking men, especially when the halo of a coming celebrity surrounded the so-called "dear."

The well-known musician, Sir Roland Watts, loomed in sight, and Mrs. Vincent signalled to him with her fan. She was tired of politicians, and liked to find herself in a little causerie of the arts.

"I've just been talking of you," she said, "telling this scoffer you have been helping Arthur in his selection of a choir."

The sculptor denied he had ever scoffed, declaring he was eager to sample to-morrow's triumph. The latter word held doubt, but only to sensitive ears.

"I shall be at the organ," said Sir Roland. "By the way, scoffer or no scoffer, the outside will interest you, the case is magnificent, and recalls to mind those wondrous sixteenth and seventeenth century organs of Germany."

"Then, of course, you have already seen this Temple in which worldly Society men and women are to be converted?"

The sculptor's tone jarred a little on Sir Roland.

"Yes. It's a building of which young Paris may well be proud. When it bursts upon the eye, it takes the breath away. It is a feast of wealth indeed, a wealth of colouring, of light, of beautiful execution, of restrained and dignified design."

"Somebody is jealous at not being asked to contribute to the Temple of Art," whispered Mrs. Vincent behind her fan to Mario. "Why go abroad, when there are such sculptors in England as our cynical friend?"

She laughed in a low, rather taking way, and looked at Mario from under her eyelids.

"It really is time," she continued, "we, as a class, were taken in hand, and especially appealed to. So much has been done for Bethnal Green, Shoreditch, and the poorer neighbourhoods generally. When you come to think of it, there is no mission which caters for us alone. Arthur is doing for our souls what the Ritz of Paris, the Savoy of Cairo, the big hotels of London do for our bodies. He has certainly devoted his wealth,

his time, his whole existence to this mission, so far. We must reward him by trying to be good."

An elderly woman, in a long straight robe of mouse-coloured velvet, came within the range of Mario's eyes.

Seeing an unfamiliar face of a rather remarkable type, he asked his companion if she knew "the lady in the glorified dressing-gown."

"Oh! yes, she's that horrid old authoress, Mrs. Hillingdon. I don't wonder you haven't met her, for she never goes out anywhere except to political gatherings. You see, she writes political novels. I had to sit next her once in the Ladies' Gallery for my sins; the debate was a very dull one, and the day—roasting! Every time I felt for my powder puff, she scowled at me as if I had committed a crime. We were introduced at tea afterwards on the Terrace, and she had the cheek to tell me I was a dreadful fidget. She's an atheist, let us ask her if she is going to Arthur's service to-morrow?"

Mario moved willingly in Mrs. Hillingdon's direction. He knew her books well. Her great square jaw and tiger-like eyes rather fascinated him by their stern and rugged ugliness.

"How do?" gabbled Mrs. Vincent, in her

quick, spasmodic way. "See you again to-morrow, I suppose, at the Paris affair."

"I have no intention of crossing the Channel," replied Mrs. Hillingdon, offering Mrs. Vincent an enormous hand.

"No, no, I mean Arthur's mission in South Kensington. Of course, you will patronize that, being such an old friend of the family."

Mrs. Hillingdon pushed the grey hair off her forehead. It grew in wild profusion, and exactly matched her dress.

"Ah ! poor, dear Mrs. Paris, I have known her since a girl, and I must say I pity her with all my heart. I think she feels her son's extraordinary behaviour very acutely. I saw her this afternoon, but she would hardly speak of the opening of this Temple, dedicated to the memory of her sister. She would not appear to-night for fear of being questioned. She is highly sensitive on the subject."

"I don't see why she should mind," murmured Mrs. Vincent. "Arthur is doing it with Jane Cardigan's money, it doesn't affect his mother."

"But she cannot bear to think he is laying himself open to ridicule," answered Mrs. Hillingdon, hotly, and the tiger-eyes flashed. "She

fears he has the most theatrical and extravagant ideas. His one thought is how to attract people, just as if a place of worship should vie with a place of entertainment. I am much in sympathy with her views. Dear me, it seems only the other day I was staying at Windycross, and Arthur was an Eton boy, at home with a weak heart, while that madcap creature, Jane Cardigan, then a mere girl, was turning the house topsyturvy with her flirtations and intrigues. Of course, it is really many a long year ago, but I never stayed under the same roof with my friend's sister again. Jane's ideas were diametrically opposed to mine, we had many a fiery argument I fear."

Mario could picture Jane with her *joie de vivre*, her sunny smiles, her quick wit, crossing swords with this weight of solid intelligence. As the thought presented itself, Mrs. Vincent murmured an introduction.

"In spite of your prejudice, you will doubtless attend the opening to-morrow, Madame," he said. "A great writer like yourself must see everything."

Mario looked singularly small beside Mrs. Hillingdon, who dwarfed all slight people with her massive frame. She bent to him patronizingly,

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and with a certain interest, seeing he was the most popular portrait painter of the day.

"I shall go, but from no religious motives. For nearly half a century I have been a confirmed atheist." This was evidently a familiar statement of hers, from the way in which she repeated the words. "My husband, however, holds different views. He occasionally reads aloud the report of the Bishops in Convocation, or an ecumenical conference of the Wesleyans, it all seems very dull and perfectly uninteresting to me. But various religions appeal to him, he is an unstable soul blown about by divers winds."

"Rome will get him if you are not careful," said Mrs. Vincent. "The Great Mother has a knack of drawing in her children, and holding them with an iron glove."

"I think not. I found him the other day smiling over a papal encyclical on the wickedness of Freemasonry. We have many friends Freemasons, nice pleasant people, who never, to our knowledge, plot against the Government, or concern themselves with the terrible crimes at which the Pope's encyclical seemed to hint."

"Is your husband present this evening, Madame?" asked Mario,

"Yes, he is down-stairs, looking for Mr. Paris."

"Will Arthur be here to-night?" asked Mrs. Vincent quickly.

"I hope so. My husband is greatly impressed, and will not sympathize at all with poor Mrs. Paris. He came on purpose to meet Arthur. He wanted to help him in the decoration of the Temple, but Arthur already had his advisers."

"I had no idea Mr. Hillingdon was artistic," said Mrs. Vincent. "What were his ideas? Do tell me. I'm so desperately interested in the Temple."

Mrs. Hillingdon paused, as if doubting the speaker. Then seeing perhaps the rivetted look in Mario's eyes, as they discussed Jane Cardigan's great memorial, she vouchsafed the information.

"He had designed a magnificent screen of carved oak on a base of pink and green marble, recalling the East Anglican and Devonshire types, a mingling of the good points of both. The solid lower panels carried delicately carved brackets and canopies for figures, to be made of bronze. In mediæval screens these panels frequently represented incidents in the lives of the saints of the Catholic Church, but Arthur Paris

had already said he would have no harking back to the Middle Ages. It was here my husband surprised me by an original idea. He declared the figures should represent those who had done good in their own particular sphere."

"I hope," broke in Mrs. Vincent, "Arthur was to be among them. I should love to have seen Arthur in bronze."

"Certainly not! The Bishop of London was one, vested in cope and mitre, as a symbol of his high office; John Wesley another, carrying a manuscript of psalms and hymns; then Spurgeon, bearing in his hands a model of the great building erected in the South of London by his wonderful congregation; Father Damien, in the habit of his order, tending a leper child; John Henry Newman, carrying his *Apologia*; Martin Luther, holding a hammer in one hand and a nail in the other, to signify his nailing the papal bull on the church door; Erasmus, in his traditional garb; John Milton, holding a volume of *Paradise Lost*; Dr. Pusey, the founder of the modern High Church Party; John Wycliffe, preaching from a mediæval pulpit, such as exists to-day in front of the rood screen of Dartmouth Church; Bishop Cranmer, robed as he appears

in the Lambeth Palace picture ; and lastly, Queen Elizabeth, one of the founders of the modern Church of England."

"I consider," cried Mrs. Vincent with a gasp, "Mr. Hillingdon has a most versatile imagination. Arthur should surely have requisitioned him to help."

As she spoke she saw in the distance the much discussed owner of Jane Cardigan's Temple, wending his way through the crowd with the Duke of Darrell. Every moment his progress was delayed by eager friends pushing forward for a word. She felt sure they were all saying, "We are coming to-morrow."

He went straight across to a young and exceedingly beautiful girl at the far end of the great reception room. She was standing between two men.

"Monsieur Mario, you know all the pretty women in London," said Mrs. Vincent quickly, "tell me, who is the lovely young creature with the real complexion? Look now, you must see her! She is shaking hands with Arthur."

Mario looked with all his eyes.

"The face is new to me," he said.

"So it must be new to London. Isn't she a

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picture? What a wealth of feeling in that smile."

"Madame is right. The young girl has great attraction."

"Perhaps Mrs. Hillingdon can tell us her name."

The authoress put up a lorgnette.

"Oh! you mean Bloom Elphinstone. I have met her at Windycross. She is just out. The grey-haired man is her father, he's only in England for a few weeks, the other is a Colonial, Mr. Stone."

Mario managed to drift from Mrs. Vincent's side, and edged his way nearer the new beauty. The sight of the young, pure face raised no emotion in his soul. He was looking at it from a professional point of view. He would like to have painted Bloom Elphinstone as a saint, an angel, a martyr, in flames of fire, or with wings of gold, a figure in a ray of light before an altar, a Jeanne d'Arc pinioned to the stake.

He watched Arthur also and the Duke of Darrell. The latter had loved Jane. Then to-morrow would mean much to him. Mario fancied he saw in Arthur's face the expression of a growing force, which daily took a more complete possession of his mind. To-morrow, what did it hold

for the man in whose arms Jane died, and who since acknowledged, "I have seen her!"

The effects of that night were gathering like a storm in parched mountain lands, the storm of a pent-up nature, which must break with tropical force upon the ice-cold hearts of godless men and sexless women, who for love of the world crucified the Saviour afresh, and wrung once more from the Man of Sorrows that great heart-rending cry, "Why hast thou forsaken Me?"

To call them back, to plead a Saviour's love, to remove the sting of Jane's bitter words, "I was too rich to be saved!" for this was the mission conceived, and brought to the eve of its sensational birth.

Mario caught his breath. It seemed to his overwrought imagination Jane Cardigan would live again on the morrow in that Temple of worship, love and prayer. Love spiritualized and united to worship, prayer made perfect by the dying injunction, to bear fruit upon the anniversary of her death.

"A year to-morrow," he thought, "since I painted her in the shadows of numbered hours, in the last glow of sunset, in the tremulous falling of a leaf still tender with the bloom of spring."

CHAPTER XVI

ARTHUR PARIS had never looked more manly, more absolutely divorced from a hypocritically sanctimonious person than on the opening night of Jane Cardigan's Temple.

As the fashionable throng of invited guests drove up to this new and unconventional place of worship, the expression of their faces made a curious study. Each queried mentally, "What shall we see? What shall we hear?"

Glances, easily interpreted, words in tones of veiled surprise were exchanged in the vestibule, where wraps could be left, before the congregation were ushered to a spacious hall, circular in shape, with a lofty dome. Terraces eight feet wide, rose one above the other, comfortably furnished with armchairs. The circles converged to a dais, evidently intended for speakers, but no space appeared reserved for a choir. The whole, lighted by invisible lamps, created an impression of comfort and luxury artistically blended.

On all sides the work of the artist, sculptor, and craftsman gladdened the eye, the hidden lights giving forth a thousand rays of colour.

"What a haven of rest and beauty!" whispered Mrs. Vincent, who had brought a little bevy of friends, after an early dinner. "Monsieur Mario, sit by me, and if necessary, hold me down. This dazzling scene enthrals me."

Monsieur Mario bowed to the old Duchess of Darrell, who suffered terribly from gout, and seldom approved of anything. This evening, however, she seated herself in an extremely comfortable chair with a positive glow of approval. Being short-sighted, she brought a small pair of opera glasses, which she drew from a velvet bag. She was known to be a somewhat disreputable and very worldly old lady, living solely for herself, unloving to her children, thoughtless towards dependents, an inherent grumbler. She sprang from one of the oldest families in England, but was always conspicuous for her bad form, and had done more to lower the standard of social life than any woman of her time.

She levelled her glasses first at the assembled company, and then at a long window.

"Those curves are exquisite," she said. "They surpass anything I have seen in the cathedrals of Normandy. The architect shows great skill in producing mullions of such length."

The Duchess liked to air her knowledge. She addressed herself to a pale, soberly-attired girl on her left, one of her much bullied daughters. Lady Louisa made no reply. She too was short-sighted, but had the good taste not to produce opera glasses. Through her pince-nez, however, the small bright eyes were fixed with wonderful intensity on a life-sized crucifix. A new strange note warmed the heart, as curious glances turned to this radiant image. In place of the orthodox representation of a scarred and wounded figure hanging on a tree, Christ, vested in the robes of the great High Priest, reposed with outstretched arms against a glorified cross. No mark of pain marred His face, but an expression of triumph, as of Death's Conqueror, the smiling radiant lips seeming almost to speak a message of welcome in the scintillating light.

A delicate scent of flowers made the air fragrantly sweet, and as fresh comers continued to arrive, they sank into the inviting receptacles with a feeling of contentment and ease.

Softly at first, then thrilling into a volume of sound, music crept, swelled and breathed praise from the direction of the dais, travelling slowly round the whole building, until every arch and

corner rang with harmony. The gallery occupied by musicians could not be seen, only the elaborate frame of a wonderful organ on the opposite side of the Temple, showed where Sir Roland Watts was seated.

An unusual medley of the Press mixed with this social yet cosmopolitan crowd. Not only had the leading daily papers applied for tickets. *The Church Times* reporter arrived simultaneously with the *Methodist Recorder*, *The Christian Herald*, *English Churchman*. *The Tablet*, *The Guardian*, and even *The British Medical Journal* were represented. The latter's presence caused some speculation among journalists until they learned that extraordinary care had been given to the ventilation of the Temple, a simple but ingenious system of purifying the atmosphere being in force.

Sir William Lambdon and Harold Stone came together, and seated themselves near the young Duke of Darrell's overdressed mother.

Sir William wondered if the Duchess realized how deeply her son had loved Jane Cardigan.

Lady Louisa leant forward and spoke to Sir William, her pale face illuminated by the glow of coloured light.

"Have you seen my brother?" she asked.

"Yes, he is with Arthur Paris. I've just been talking to them outside."

"Mr. Paris has a great influence," she whispered timidly. "My brother was very strange for some months after Miss Cardigan died, so melancholy and depressed. Then he became interested in this—this venture. From that day he changed. He prepared me for a beautiful building, but I never expected anything so restful, so artistic."

She collapsed into silence, as if afraid of her own voice, though every one conversed pleasantly in quite audible tones.

Not far away, the atheist writer, Mrs. Hillingdon, still wearing shapeless grey, stuffily bunched at the throat, was discussing the elaborate decorations with her husband, who looked rather excited and awe-stricken.

She was pointing to some silver gates through which they had just passed, ornamented with many coloured pictures in enamel.

"Beautiful work," she declared, in a rasping voice, "I like that, and the Spanish mahogany panelling, best of all. What a fortune the boy must have spent! There is dear Ethel Paris, she

looks very uncomfortable. Do go and ask her and Percy to sit near us."

Arthur's parents had just entered. Percy appeared rather amused. He was smiling and talking with his friends, telling them, no doubt, he hadn't an idea what Arthur was up to, but the place had certainly a goodly air of comfort, and he was glad to rest in an armchair after his golfing match at Wimbledon. Mrs. Paris glanced from right to left uneasily. The sea of faces for the moment staggered her. She seemed inclined to turn and run away. On all sides she recognized acquaintances, friends of Jane, men whom the latter had refused, in that tactful way peculiar to herself, women who had loved her, women who had been jealous, the card-playing, theatre-going, ball-giving, pleasure-seeking set of social London, meeting together in a Temple erected to the memory of a butterfly existence.

In joining Mrs. Hillingdon, Mrs. Paris passed Mario, and cut him deliberately. She asked Arthur not to send him a ticket, since she considered his friendship with Jane had been most compromising and reprehensible.

"So plucky of you to come when you dislike

it so much," murmured Mrs. Hillingdon, pressing Ethel's hand.

"Percy made me. He said, 'we owe it to Arthur.' Oh! dear, there is Mr. Ashburn, our clergyman from the country. What will he think of it all? I do blame Arthur for not leaving our parish alone. The head-mistress of Park House School has come up on purpose, and is staying at the Metropole. Every moment I see some one fresh I know. Percy, Lady Stewart is bowing to you, she is with her sister, Mrs. Corbett. Surely it's very odd for people to be talking and bowing to each other in a place of worship, treating it like a concert room."

"You've been contributing a bit to the talking, my dear, if it comes to that," whispered Percy. "I tell you I'm beginning to feel proud of Arthur, no idea he'd got such taste. Pity Jane is not alive to see it! You know she charged him to step out of the common groove. She said, 'Do something for people like me.'"

As Percy spoke the music died away, and a soul-stirring boy's voice, which appeared to come from Heaven, sang in clear, plaintive tones one line from the well-known anthem —

"How blest are they who hope and trust in the Lord!"

The effect proved magical. The worldliness of the chatting multitude changed to sudden spellbound interest. From whence came the voice, with its almost piercing sweetness? The listeners caught their breath, and waited.

During the pause which followed, Arthur Paris appeared on the dais, upright, tall, and pale. No trace of self-consciousness or confusion marred his dignified bearing, and the light of divine earnestness made brilliant the eyes which looked across the multitude. Such is the power of personality added to absolute sincerity, that a feeling of reverence for a man so young, who had dared so much, spread like an electric current. Even Mrs. Paris lost her fear, and bending forward with clasped hands, gazed with a new wonder at her son.

It seemed for the first time that the mother beheld her son, the son she had never really known, the boy who grew to manhood intellectually a stranger to her.

Involuntarily the same thought must have sprung to every mind. Here was a man, living in the fashionable world, coming fearlessly before

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his friends to speak to them of God. Without doubt a courageous action. How would he do it? What would he say? In absolute stillness Arthur Paris gave out the words :—

“Nevertheless at Thy Word we will let down the net.”

Spreading his arms to the Temple, he told them with simple directness,

“This is my net.”

He didn't try to preach, he didn't aspire to great oratory, no, he kept his orators up his sleeve as it were, their names inscribed on a long list to be made public later. But he spoke as friend to friend, in a musical ringing voice, which travelled to every ear.

They were there, he said, to weigh and consider great truths. The Temple had been erected for the working of miracles, for the raising of the dead.

Just for a moment he felt the startled impression the words gave, smiling it away with that wonderful charm of temperament which made him so like Jane, he added :—

“To raise those who were dead in trespasses and sins. To ask men and women to awake and live with God. This life,” he assured them,

"would not prevent their entering into the legitimate pleasures of the world, nor rob them of the joys which blessed their days, nor would it entail putting on an outward garb of sanctity." He asked them to take a triumphant tone, not merely to accept the fact they were God's creatures, but His most favoured children. If it were hard for a rich man to enter Heaven, all the more help would be given, if he'd buckle on his armour, and at least have a try! It wasn't so difficult as they thought, it was as easy to carry a watchword in the heart as a latch key in the pocket, they had only to say with sure and certain faith, "*I know* that my Redeemer liveth!"

Immediately the same exquisite boy's voice sang from the unseen heights to soft music the same glad tidings, "*I know, I know* that my Redeemer liveth!"

The music soothed and yet stimulated. Answering voices crossed and recrossed the Temple in echoing song, then once more a silence fell, and every eye turned to the dais wonderingly.

Another figure appeared, a figure familiar to all present, a representative figure. The word went quickly round, "The Bishop of London!"

CHAPTER XVII

WINNINGTON INGRAM stood for a moment without speaking, his eyes travelling round the sea of faces illuminated by shaded lights. Before him sat the women and men of the great world, leading politicians, people of wealth, people of position, people who, in their busy lives of pleasure-making, found they had little or no time for God.

Numbers had come forth that evening merely to be amused, but the sight of the hard-working Bishop brought reality to the scene. This was no mere entertainment for sensationalism, but a work started in deadly earnest, strengthened by prayer and fervent endeavour, by the last injunction of a dying woman, by a vision of Christ Himself.

It seemed as if some mesmeric influence descended upon the meeting, holding all those souls spellbound in a wonderful silence for the few seconds in which the Bishop faced them with lips closed. Then the voice rose, and the men spoke.

He quoted for his watchword, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."—Rom. 1 : 16.

He knew quite well, as he gave out these words, that one half at least of his listeners were

intellectually, morally, or practically ashamed of this Gospel. He poured forth a defence of the old Gospel, which the people had called "out of date, insufficiently attested, and of no moral power." He quoted with telling force and directness from a writer who contrasted the ideals of the Sermon on the Mount, with the ideals of the world of to-day.

"The Sermon on the Mount," said the Bishop, "contained a series of ideals. Here are some —"

"The ideal of poverty."

"The ideal of humility."

"The ideal of 'turning the other cheek,'" (the absence of revenge).

"The ideal of self-sacrifice."

"The ideal of loving an enemy."

"The ideal of innocence."

"And here are some of the axioms of the world's creed —"

"The ideal of wealth."

"The ideal of ostentation, smartness, notoriety."

"The ideal of self-assertion and blowing one's own trumpet."

"The ideal of trampling on others and rising at their expense."

"The ideal of personal enjoyment, selfishness, refined or coarse."

"The ideal of compromise," (the politician's ideal).

"The ideal of 'sowing one's wild oats,' and 'a rake makes the best husband,' etc."

"The ideal of fashionable impurity."

"Good Heavens! Think of a millionaire calling himself a Christian in the face of the text, 'How hardly shall they that have riches (or trust in riches) enter into the Kingdom of God!' Think of the politician calling himself a Christian in view of the texts, 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon,' and 'Ye shall not do evil that good may come!' Think of our smart leaders of society calling themselves Christians, and repeating the words, 'Blessed are ye poor, blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and revile you, and persecute you!'"

The Bishop hit out straight from the shoulder, and the women leaning back on their cushions, bent forward suddenly with strained, attentive faces, while the men, to whom perhaps he more especially addressed himself, were rivetted by the personality of the speaker.

For the much criticised gospels he pleaded, and argued, the gospels which, in his opinion, had come out of the crucible of modern criticism ten times as strong as they went in. He drew

attention to the new light which Professor Ramsay's discoveries had thrown upon the Acts of the Apostles, quoting also Mr. Lecky, author of *European Morals*, who wrote of Christ, "The record of those three short years had done more to regenerate mankind, than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the plans of statesmen."

"It was the Gospel," cried the Bishop, "that taught morality to Europe, that brought a spring of purity and therefore hope into the decadence of Rome, and tamed the Goths who conquered Rome. It was the Gospel which civilized the wild and warlike tribes of Germany, and converted barbarous Britain. It was the Gospel which created Christian Europe. It is the Gospel which, at the present time, sends out night by night an army of faithful women to rescue the fallen. It is the Gospel which makes some of you give your time and money to help the poor. It is the Gospel of honour and truth, which is the purifying element in life.

"In ever increasing numbers the Gospel is teaching men and women to live the life of the great Sermon on the Mount, bracing them in their troubles, curbing their sinful passions, teaching them to do justice, have mercy, and walk

humbly with their God. There can be no reason then, practically, any more than morally or intellectually, to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. Put yourselves in imagination on your death-beds. After all, it's only anticipating a little. What is going to help you then, if you have to meet your God empty handed? Not your fortune, not your popularity or cleverness! To have looked round and seen what you could do to help others for Christ's sake; to have fed your soul and to have fed the souls of others on the Bread of Life, that shall bring a man peace at the last. Are you waiting for another Agony and Bloody Sweat, for another Incarnation, for another death upon the Cross, and another Resurrection? You will never have it. Once and for all He came, once and for all He died; once and for all He rose again, and you will stand before One who bears in His sacred body the marks of the pain which He endured for you. Do not keep Him waiting forever! Jesus stands in your midst to-night, He breathes on you and says, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.' Come to Him in faith, and again and again you shall hear the voice reply, 'Son, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace.'"

The Bishop concluded, and passed to a vacant

seat reserved for him, and again music and song fell softly on the ear of the listeners. Even Mrs. Hillingdon's tiger-like face looked humanized in the mellow light. All sign of fear had vanished from the eyes of Ethel Paris. She forgot the dreaded criticism of her son, forgot she had wished so short a time ago that the Rev. William Ashburn had remained in his country parish. Her heart beat faster, the conventional woman lay tamed and subdued under the soul—which must ever be free.

"Will there be any more speakers?" asked the Duchess of Darrell, in an audible whisper.

The timid Lady Louisa blushed.

"Oh! hush, Mamma," she murmured breathlessly, strung up to unwonted courage. To her impressionable nature the utterance of commonplace words at that moment was a blasphemy.

As the music of violins wailed an answer to the organ's vox humana, a fluttering commotion swayed the congregation. Instinctively every one moved with telepathic surprise, exchanging glances and only half-breathed comments. A fresh face took the stage, the face of a young and beautiful girl. With her coming the singing died away, she stood as in a reverie waiting for the last sweet thrilling notes of the organ's voice,

Then in childish, eager tones, with head thrown back and eyes ablaze, with an almost fanatical inspiration, she spoke of the present and the future life. Such simple, heartfelt words, such intensity of purpose, such utter forgetfulness of self, was startling from one so young. Her slight form looked so spiritual, that to some it seemed she could hardly be a creature of flesh and blood, but a messenger from another sphere, a bright spirit sent to gladden and etherealize the sordid modern world.

She spoke for barely five minutes, but her voice was a song, and set the pulses beating faster with a natural appreciation of beauty, purity, and grace. The lights waxed dim as her voice grew stronger, and in the fading rays of tender gold, she flung herself suddenly on her knees, invoking the Almighty to open the hearts of all to receive Christ. Then, with impassioned appeal, she begged the congregation to join her in saying the Lord's prayer. A great chorus of "Amen" came from the invisible gallery, the lights shone bright again with increased radiance, and the Old Hundredth was sung.

Thus ended the opening meeting of Jane Cardigan's Temple. As the silent worshippers passed out, papers were handed to each, announcing that meetings would take place every Wednesday, Friday and Sunday evenings from

9 : 30 to 10 : 30. A list of able speakers who had promised to attend appeared on the notice, which concluded with the welcome information that no contributions would be asked.

Strange that the crowd which arrived talking, smiling, wondering, left in reverent, awed silence.

Next day the newspapers gave lengthy and glowing descriptions of a memorable night, and a furore set in for admission tickets.

"It was a revelation just to watch the faces," remarked a man who had observed.

"For the first time some of them found their souls," replied a cynic who was no longer cynical.

"It's just sensationalism," jeered the people who had not been there.

The congregation thought differently.

To his friends Arthur Paris was something more than a missionary, he was the pioneer of a new note, a note of beautiful worship and inspired feeling.

The hush of wonder first, and then the word passed round—"he has succeeded."

"In what?" asked the world.

The answer was simple :—"Go and see."

The world is very obedient to the call of novelty, especially when the "go and see" comes from a cultured aristocratic moneyed class,

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN Mario left Jane Cardigan's Temple, he escaped as quickly as possible from Mrs. Vincent.

The anniversary of Jane's death alone was enshrined in his mind as a sacred and solemn day, but such an anniversary as it proved, moved him beyond words.

He knew what he would do, how he would show his overwhelming appreciation of Arthur's great memorial. The thought brought mingled pain and pleasure.

Outside, a long line of carriages and motor broughams, waited for the congregation. It was not till they had all dispersed, Arthur appeared alone. He had bidden his many friends good-night, staying behind to pray in the building now dimly lighted, and mysteriously magnificent in its emptiness and silence.

As he appeared, a private hansom drew up. Arthur sprang in, but before he was seated, Monsieur Mario stood upon the step.

The younger man read intense excitement in the artist's face. His large, dark eyes, half tear-

ful, pathetic, and wholly earnest, were fixed upon Arthur, with a world of emotion in their depths. It mattered little to Mario at such a moment that Mrs. Paris had cold-shouldered him for years, that only an hour ago she passed him without a sign save the tilting of a proud chin, the drooping of sarcastic lips. Arthur had shown himself of different clay. He stood confessed a fisher of men, and filled his net—his Temple, with souls from the deep sea of fashion's insidious tide. No small prejudices or narrow views confined his intellect.

He looked kindly at Mario, reading his heart. There was a deeper expression of congratulation in the eager clasp of the artist's outstretched hand, than in all the words of commendation spoken to Arthur that night. Simultaneously he remembered, to this man he had acknowledged on a memorable evening, "I have seen her!"

"May I come with you?" asked Mario.

As Arthur assented, the artist slipped into the vacant seat.

"I want you to return with me if you will. I have something to show you, something to give you for—for her Temple."

Mario's voice broke, and he stared out into the night, keeping his features severely under control.

Nevertheless his companion noticed the twitching of the sensitive mouth.

Arthur gave the order to drive to Monsieur Mario's, thanking the artist in a quiet, soothing tone.

For a while they sat in silence, at last Mario spoke :—

“ It's her face, her face on the day of her death. You know she came to my studio to say good-bye.”

“ Yes, I know,” replied Arthur.

“ As she lay back on the cushions, with eternity written already in her eyes, I made a lightning sketch of that wonderful ethereal presence. I was half mad with grief, I hardly knew what I did. I think some supernatural power came to my aid. Perhaps you believe in inspiration, I think to-night we saw an instance of it, when Miss Elphinstone appeared before your congregation. I have treasured the picture sacredly, to me it has been a religion. No one ever saw it, but now,” he paused and caught his breath, “ all eyes shall behold Jane Cardigan in her Temple of Art. You will hang the picture there, in memoriam. It is a fit home for so sweet a face.”

Arthur could see that the offering was a sacrifice, rendered gladly by a stirred and generous soul. If it cost Mario dear to give up the picture

which had proved the greatest consolation of the past year, Arthur knew he must accept the gift, since Mario would not wish to be spared the pain of parting with his most prized possession.

They went silently into the artist's house, Mario opening the door with a key. He led the way at once to his room, up a winding stair.

At the foot of his bed, the picture, magnificently framed, stood on an easel of gold. All around bloomed white flowers, tall lilies in pots, nosegays in quaint jars, while a wreath of crimson roses crowned the easel. Mario had not forgotten to note the anniversary, and place floral tributes upon this picture, which to him had become a shrine. No thought of an outside eye seeing the fragrant manifestations of a sincere sentiment, had entered his head. If any one had told him he would part with the picture, he would have replied, "sooner I part with my right hand!"

But Arthur was not looking at the delicate blossoms, nor the gold easel and sacred lamp from a mosque, which hung above the pictured face. He stood rivetted by the wonderful life in those spiritualized features. Once more Jane was before him with that whimsical look of hers, Jane, brave and smiling, though weak and pros-

trate; Jane, with that daring challenge in her eyes, which made men her slaves; Jane, in the full beauty of her womanhood, touched by the shadow of premature death.

No need to praise the artist's skill, as Arthur stood with bowed head, his very attitude expressed his reverence for the work of a great master. From that moment Mario was his more than friend. In the silence of the artist's room Arthur opened his heart as he had not done since the day Jane died, telling simply but graphically the story of his vision, just as it occurred.

"To-night," he said, "is the result of that vision. Until she came to guide me, until I saw the image of the Saviour moving among those people who seemed to have forgotten Him, I was powerless. From that hour I went straight ahead, I knew what I must do. Too early yet to see any result, but time alone will show whether we have toiled all night and caught nothing. I know most certainly that it was at Christ's bidding I let down the net."

It was late before the two men parted, and until the bright morning light burst into his room Mario kept lamps burning by the picture, that when he opened his eyes he might see Jane

Cardigan's face. In the morning he pressed a passionate kiss upon the canvas.

"I shall see you," he whispered, "often—often, in the Temple and in my dreams. But it will not be the same, sweet one, it will not be the same!"

The news spread later that a wonderful portrait of Jane Cardigan, drawn from memory, since her death, had been presented to the Temple of Art by the celebrated Mario. It was spoken of as a masterpiece, one of the most impressive works the great artist had ever produced. Its fame spread far and wide, and several Royal personages (for Mario was a favourite at Court) went to see his latest work.

Even Ethel Paris wrote him a line of gratitude, and begged he would let bygones be bygones, showing by this act that already the refining influence of the Revival had brought forth fruits of charity.

The artist sent her in return one of his *debonnair* notes, tender, sympathetic, yet verging on humour. It breathed a spirit of peace, and though Ethel Paris could not quite understand its subtle yet tactful passing off of an unpleasant estrangement, she knew it buried the ill, placing them once more upon a plane of friendship.

CHAPTER XIX

THOUGH Mrs. Hillingdon would not confess to being impressed, she acknowledged the services interested her, and attended regularly.

Arthur had certainly selected a remarkable list of preachers, while the attraction of the music alone would have filled his building.

At each fresh meeting the fashionable world waxed enthusiastic, flocking to the Temple, and bringing in new recruits.

Mrs. Paris quite changed her attitude. She began to think she had always approved of the work undertaken by her son.

Arthur laboured hard and diligently, and his mother gradually perceived he had become a power among a certain set who hitherto ignored religion, turning their backs on worship.

"Though Percy and I are settled in our house," she said, "Arthur still keeps on his St. James' Street rooms, we call it his office. Next week Father Ignatius is staying the night there. He has promised to come from Llanthony Abbey on purpose to speak at the Wednesday meeting. Arthur went to see him at Abergavenny, a most interesting visit."

She spoke in tones of gratification to her old

friend, Lady Stewart, who observed, from under sleepy eyelids, Mrs. Paris's softened manner and more harmonious expression, as the visitor talked of Arthur and his plans.

"I shall certainly go and hear the Rev. Father," Lady Stewart replied. "I once had the opportunity at the Portman Rooms, and have never forgotten him."

"Arthur showed me such a kind letter from him," Ethel continued, warming to the subject, and glowing with maternal pride. "The writing paper was characteristic of the earnest, sympathetic expressions used in the note. Printed in blue were the words, 'Y Gwir Yu Erbyn Y Byd.' Beneath them a cross, with 'Jesus only,' and 'Pax' at the foot."

"Arthur has certainly selected a wide range in his choice of speakers," said Lady Stewart. "Is it true he has enlisted the services one even of those 'world-rousers,' as they have been called, Dr. Torrey and Mr. Alexander?"

"Yes. He had a particular reason in asking them. It seems, when they held their great meetings at the Albert Hall, they complained afterwards Kensington had expressed its inability to be enthusiastic. They felt the indifference of people like ourselves, who never attended the crowded gatherings, but left the privilege of

‘being saved’ to others. Arthur thought it would interest a Society congregation to meet these remarkable personalities in the congenial atmosphere of his well-ventilated Temple. For once the orchestra and organ will not be heard. The American Revivalists are to have it all their own way, with only a grand piano and Revival hymns.” Lady Stewart smiled.

“I like a wide outlook and a large scope of ideas,” she said. “Where does the boy get it from? I can’t forget he was at Eton with Jack, and Jack seems still a boy to me. Certainly he has never done anything in the world. Thank goodness, Arthur’s example is making him think. He has decided to take up some work for Oxford House, though when at Oxford he never interested himself in any good movement. He has been to all Arthur’s meetings, and seems quite changed. You see, Mrs. Paris, your son’s converts don’t stand up and profess their faith, it isn’t their way, but they go and improve their lives, which speaks more for the influence of the mission than any open declarations of repentance. Take that frivolous little Mrs. Vincent for instance, the most typical butterfly imaginable. Why, she is having a drawing-room meeting for some excellent charity. She never turned out her room

in the past for anything but a dance. She asked me to come, adding with a laugh, 'It doesn't sound much like me, does it? But one must do something, you know.'"

The arrival of visitors interrupted the conversation. Mrs. Corbett brought Bloom Elphinstone, and a few minutes later Harold Stone was announced. The look of genuine delight on his face when he saw Bloom was unmistakable. Once more the world held light and sunshine for him. Though Jane's memory could never fade, a fresh flood of sentiment warmed his heart whenever he rested his eyes on the earnest face of this young and beautiful girl.

"It is strange," she said, "how often we meet."

"To-day," he replied, "it is quite by chance, but not always, you know. I am afraid I shadow you, but please forgive me."

They were seated a little apart from the others, his voice reached her ear alone. She coloured slightly, a startled wonder crept into the large eyes. To her Harold appeared rather a wonderful person, so strong, tall and manly, with none of the affectations of the younger men she met in society. His face had seemed to her to shine across the sea of faces on that wonderful night, when, at Arthur's request, she addressed a vast

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congregation, exhorting them to prayer. She knew he had loved Jane Cardigan, for often he lingered tenderly on her name, speaking of his admiration, and the blank her death made in his life. Then by degrees he spoke less of the past, and more of the present, eager also to hear Bloom's plans for the future. She grew accustomed to talk to him confidentially.

She hardly knew whether she was destined to live with her grandmother, or join her father abroad. He disliked the idea of her going to an unhealthy climate, at the same time a life in London was hardly to her taste.

Harold fancied he knew the life for which her nature craved. He pictured her in the wild freedom of the pasture land, among real men and women, far removed from the puppets of society. The artificial environment of towns held no fascination for Bloom Elphinstone. She wanted work, interest and service, God's service above all. Her ambition was to help some mission at home or abroad, but here again the stumbling-block of youth intervened. Until she was of age, her father absolutely forbade her undertaking any serious career. He wanted her to be like other girls, to throw herself into the pleasures of the hour. It had been a great concession on his part, her public ap-

pearance at the opening of Jane Cardigan's Temple, and only the repeated persuasions of Arthur Paris and Harold Stone, induced him to consent.

"After all," he said, when finally granting his permission, "the congregation will be very select, and I understand entrance is only obtained by ticket."

That night, gave Harold Stone an insight into the power, the fire, the wonder of Bloom Elphinstone's nature. From a friend he became her lover, with the pure, inspiring devotional love of a strong character for its true mate. He felt she was for him ; a higher force had predestined this, snatching away the smiling, tantalizing, sparkling face of butterfly Jane, and giving instead the intense, remarkable, unusual type, which Bloom Elphinstone presented.

"I am returning shortly to Australia," he said. "I have stayed away too long."

"I shall miss you," answered Bloom candidly, "you have been so very kind. Some day, when I am older, I shall come and see you in Australia. I mean to travel all over the world. I shall be quite elderly by that time, because it seems you can't do anything nice when you are young. Oh ! if only I could take a great leap on, and find myself forty. I should be so glad."

"Don't say that, it isn't right. I can't bear to

hear you undervaluing your youth, when it holds so much."

"What does it hold?" she asked, almost defiantly. "A round of so-called amusements, which, by some freak of my composition, I cannot wholly enjoy, a longing to do things which are not considered right for a girl who has only just left school. Father says I should have been perfectly happy as a Salvation lass in a shabby coal-scuttle bonnet. I believe he is right."

She laughed a little, but her voice held a sorrowful note, which hurt Harold.

Mrs. Paris, Lady Stewart, and Mrs. Corbett were all talking animatedly, it was possible to speak to Bloom without the slightest fear of listening ears. He seized the opportunity.

"It holds," he whispered, "something which youth should never forego. To cheat youth of its right is a crime."

"Ah! you mean enjoyment."

"Perhaps that is only another word for what I intended saying, but I hope not, I shouldn't like to think so."

He grew suddenly serious. In his eyes a strange light glistened almost feverishly.

"I mean," he said, "you must not cheat your youth of love. Look for it, seek it, demand it,

ah! if you will, pray for it, but for God's sake love somebody!"

Bloom Elphinstone turned pale. No man had ever spoken to her before with passion in his voice. This strange new thing came upon her all unprepared, she hardly knew whether to shrink back, or meet it boldly with a welcoming smile. She felt her heart beat faster, and for the moment those three other women seemed miles away, talking their social gossip, aware perhaps of Harold Stone's pre-occupation.

"To love," she said, "is to be nearer Heaven."

Her eyes were averted, but unconsciously she trembled.

"To love," he added quickly, "is to be in Heaven. Child though you are, surely you must know that. But what if a man loves a woman many years younger than himself? What if he is a rough Colonial, and can only offer her a home in the wilds of Australia? Where I live, there are men and women who tramp for miles to hear a preacher, and only get the opportunity once or twice a year. I thought the other night, if you could be there, what it would mean to them to hear you speak, and give some message of faith, hope, cheer. Don't wait till you are old to come out and visit distant lands, let me show you the world, let me take care of you."

The quickly whispered words fell on her ear like music, but before she could answer, Mrs. Corbett's voice broke in —

"Really, Bloom, we must be going if we want to pay those other calls. I'm sorry to disturb you." Bloom rose quickly, and with some signs of confusion.

She was too young to hide her feelings. The older women wondered what Harold had said to bring such a look of surprise and pleasure to the expressive face.

"Good-bye, Miss Elphinstone," he murmured. "May I come and see you soon?"

"To-morrow," she answered, "I shall be in all the afternoon."

She turned to shake hands with Lady Stewart and Mrs. Paris. Harold followed her to the drawing-room door.

"I have made up my mind to go to Australia," she told him. "I think I should like it better than England."

"Really," he said, exercising great self-mastery, "then perhaps we shall meet."

"Most probably," she answered with a tender little laugh. Then blushing furiously at her light retort, which in reality meant so much, she hurried away after Mrs. Corbett, hardly knowing if she were awake or dreaming.

CHAPTER XX

WHEN Father Ignatius came to Jane Cardigan's Temple, the wealth and beauty of the surroundings startled him. It was odd to see the well-known figure, with sandalled feet and monk's habit, making a private inspection with Arthur Paris of the many treasures collected therein. Over some he waxed enthusiastic, but sighed deeply over others, feeling perhaps, they might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. Then, shaking off the momentary depressions, he murmured rapturously, "for the love of Jesus, all this in the great name of Jesus!"

He told Arthur he had not considered what he would say to these people. When he saw their faces, the Spirit would guide him, and he should know just how to touch their hearts.

Small wonder, then, as the well dressed men and women flocked to those wide inviting chairs, that the sight of such luxury brought uppermost to the Rev. Father's mind riches, and the way of ease.

"It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle." The words seemed to face him in shining letters, he fancied an angel held aloft a scroll emblazoned with this warning.

Never had the Father's face glowed with more

divine fire, than when his bright eyes scanned the large and fashionable congregation, many of whom were still only attracted by curiosity.

Some knew the celebrated speaker well, others having merely heard of him, were for the first time in the presence of that strange magnetic figure. Such a building demanded the gorgeous vestments of priests, a pageant of colour, and there was something almost incongruous in the sombre ascetic garb of Llanthony's founder. He stood where Bishops and Archbishops had stood before him since the opening of the Temple, that meeting place which did not assume the title—Church, but remained unconsecrated, open to every creed, and school of religious thought.

His address, though long, never flagged in interest, the preacher was at his best, and spared himself no physical fatigue. He paced the dais freely, sometimes giving the idea of a caged animal, in the restless energy of movement, sometimes standing still as a stone image, with arms outstretched, and face lifted to Heaven. Money, money, money, its presence for good and evil in the world weighed upon his soul. He spoke of it in tones of crushing scorn, and in accents of holy reverence, as God's weapon, and the Devil's weapon, given to man. As the end

of his discourse drew near, close watchers perceived the signs of fatigue, which the giving forth of so much energy necessarily created, and as he paused a moment, to take a glass of water, low and sweet the voice of a singer chanted from above, "Could ye not watch with Me one hour?" from Stainer's Crucifixion.

Father Ignatius listened with a smile, his hands clasped, his eyes raised in the direction of the hidden gallery. In conclusion, he bent forward, and beamed tenderly upon his listeners.

"My friends," he murmured, "you who are brothers in the brotherhood of wealth, are you not all troubled with humps on your backs, heavy burdens that render it exceedingly difficult to pass through the 'needle's eye,' from the outer glare of the world's blazing sun, into the cool shelter of the stable cave. Other animals find the entrance easy enough, the horse, the ass, the mule, but you poor camels have to be rolled over sideways, and pushed with cruel force to effect an entrance there."

The Duchess of Darrell, who had come again with half a dozen intimate friends, as worldly and pleasure seeking as herself, whispered, with a shrugging of fat shoulders, she had never before been mentioned in connection with an ass or a mule! A little countess, with dyed hair, who sat

on her right, murmured, 'delightful!' and bent forward not to lose a word.

"The hump on our back," continued the clear voice, "is nothing to be specially proud of. Money certainly can secure much which the poor cannot obtain, but until it is able to purchase peace of mind, liberty of spirit, and a quiet conscience, it cannot rest and satisfy the higher parts of our nature, which are far more hungry than the lower appetites of our very compound being. Money is often the chief hindrance to a rich man's happiness, even, at times, the truest cause of misery. I have my eye upon one here present who is a notable proof of this last statement."

An uncomfortable sensation passed over the congregation, many turned and looked curiously around, as if to pass on the accusation. Some were quite sure they knew just to whom the Rev. Father referred. Nobody really took the remark personally, but, fearing he or she might be suspected of doing so, eyed their fellows with a convicting stare.

Several whispers passed between the women, but the speaker took no notice of the little flutter his words produced. He was careful to let his gaze fall in a way which compromised the whole multitude, for he had no wish to betray the individual.

"How many a man here perhaps," he continued, "has found out after marriage, that the woman who reigns in his heart and home, the mother of his children, is a mere machine, and hardly that, in the daily routine of his life. *He* may love *her*, *she* loves his *purse*, and lives accordingly, her real love being elsewhere. His life and heart are wrecked. His wealth has done it!"

The words drove home. In that society medley, the "mariage de convenance" was only too common. Women who married for homes of luxury, motor cars, and handsome horses, jewels, position, rich apparel, yachts, coaches, sat watching the eager, earnest monk with slightly startled faces and a catching of nervous breath.

Father Ignatius felt this, his quick intuition told him the words had struck at the conscience of his hearers, for he was keen to follow the pulse of the hour. But with a tender pity for those who had fastened the devil's yoke upon them, he dropped the subject of matrimony.

"Then," he cried, "you may well consider if your immortal souls count for anything in the solemn reckoning of fast declining days, what tremendous responsibilities wealth entails, what countless possibilities it generates, which never

weigh down the non-wealthy throngs of men. If religion, if the Word of God—the Bible—may speak, what a really terrific care wealth lays upon the conscience, upon the soul !” (He sighed with the deep agony of this overwhelming thought, and pointed with a trembling finger.) “ You are God’s stewards only, His almoners in the use you make of this talent—wealth. You *cannot* shirk the grave responsibility of its burdensome possession. You may argue and argue as you like, but the hump remains on your back. There is only one way of making ourselves fit for the burden.”

Here Father Ignatius paused, one of those long effective pauses, which formed part of the armour of his influence while preaching. He looked quietly and slowly round, from terrace to terrace his piercing eye stole, then moistened with the glimmer of unshed tears. It was a moment of emotional force centred in silence, which electrified the already interested. They waited, they listened, no sign now of a whisper passing from even the most frivolous. The moment was a psychological moment, for the declaration of the “ One Way.”

“ The one way,” his voice rang strong as ever, “ to fit yourselves for the burden of wealth, yes, even making wealth one huge joy of life is this, to come with your wealth to the feet of the King

of kings and Lord of lords, even to Jesus, who loved you, who, on the grandest, mightiest Throne of all thrones, the Cross of Calvary, the Throne of an Infinite Sacrifice of Love, gave *Himself* for you ! Then shall every piece of your golden millions be sanctified in the service of Jesus Christ, the Emperor of an empire of eternal self-sacrifice and love. By the grace of the Holy Ghost I pray to God, and His dear Son, that there may be changed hearts and streaming eyes among my listeners to-night. God bless you, my children, in Christ ! ”

Father Ignatius not merely said the words, he imparted the spirit of them, and his whole countenance breathed a benediction. He had given forth the extreme power of his eloquence, the full force of his oratory, to the camels with the humps of wealth upon their backs.

The Duchess of Darrell was no longer offended, she forgot the sentence which had roused a whispered protest, and hard old woman that she was, applied the corner of her lace handkerchief to her one glass eye.

“ Very touching,” she murmured, “ quite makes me weep, I shall send him an offering for his Llanthony Church and Mission.”

The little Countess with the obtrusively bright hair, confided to Sir William as they passed out,

she had always longed to be a nun, the dress was so romantic and becoming.

"The Duchess," she added, also in an undertone, "has been ever so much nicer since she attended these services. She is kinder to people, less selfish, so Lady Louisa told me, and wished Mr. Paris could know."

"We all wanted a little waking up, I think," replied Sir William, in his genial way. "Piety has had an extraordinary effect on poor old Harold, he's fallen in love!"

"You mean your friend Mr. Stone?"

"Yes, the opening night regularly bowled him over, he's engaged to Miss Elphinstone."

"That beautiful girl with such oceans of courage, I don't know how she did it."

"Oh! Harold isn't such a hard nut to crack."

"I mean I don't know how she stood up and asked those people to pray. I should love to feel inspired enough to lose all thought of self, and just cry to the souls of others. It brought a lump to my throat when she spoke, her voice was so soft and musical and young. Now Father Ignatius has a different effect upon me. He makes me think, and think hard. I am just going to treat that hump on my back as if it were a mortal disease. My husband is at Devonshire House

to-night, but next week I'm going to bring him to hear Dr. Torrey. He loves everything American, that's why he married me."

The Countess flitted away to her carriage, with Jack Stewart in attendance, while Lady Stewart sought him in vain, and finally drove home without him, assured he must have remained with Arthur.

"You've got to give a drawing-room meeting for Oxford House," Jack said. "They are dull things as a rule, but I will get you some excellent speakers, and we'll rake in a good haul. Mrs. Vincent had one, and the people quite enjoyed it, but she was afraid the room must have been very hot, they ate so many ices afterwards."

"I really have such heaps of engagements," sighed the Countess, protestingly.

"Of course, but you'll give up some of them for this, it's one of the countless possibilities we heard of to-night. If you can't do a little thing like that, what's the good of your hump?"

The Countess laughed softly.

"You're a tiresome boy," she said, "but you are quite right. You procure a Bishop and I'll order the ices."

"It's awfully good of you," he said. "I will write to-night to the Bishop of Kensington."

"And I to Gunter, so that's settled, Jack."

CHAPTER XXI

"Of course," said Mrs. Hillingdon, "Arthur's Revival is a distinct success. I can see that, though I have no religion."

She was seated at her desk, wearing pince-nez, and a Japanese-shaped wrapper made in the dull-est English material. Her study floor was littered with proofs, her fingers were ink-stained.

Her husband knelt by a chair, busily placing the proofs she had corrected in their proper order. He felt the greatest admiration for his wife's intelligence, and rather admired her untidy habits, taking them as a sign of genius.

"You have certainly mangled this chapter," he declared, holding up the sheets of print dubiously.

"If you look," she said, "you will see I am taking the whole chapter out of the book. I began by trying to tone it down, but it still jarred upon me. I think the devil, if there is one, must have dictated it, anyhow, it's better destroyed."

She spoke in quick short sentences, with more emotion in her tone than her husband had heard for years.

"You know," he said, "in serial form you are paid for this by the number of words. Taking

the entire chapter away means the loss of a considerable sum."

Not being a genius himself, he considered finance, a sign of weakness on his part which invariably roused his wife's ire.

"Really," she said, "your mind runs on the sordid subject of money! Do you think I am going to give the world pernicious literature for the sake of a larger check? It seems your church-going has not done you much good."

Mr. Hillingdon turned curiously to the chapter, and perused it with an expression of surprise.

The rejected manuscript held a powerfully written argument in favour of atheism, placed in the lips of one of the characters. All Mrs. Hillingdon's favourite ideas were exploited with that touch of sarcasm which made her writings popular.

Her husband remembered how, only a month ago, she had mentioned this particular chapter with pride and pleasure. Now with shame she condemned it to the waste-paper basket, calling her old theories "pernicious."

"It seems you have changed your views," he remarked. "I'm very glad."

"Not at all," she answered quickly, her sallow face colouring. "I am only anxious to avoid giving offence. I quite see that to believe is a great blessing, and if I have not the privilege of faith,

there's no reason why I should try to pervert others."

"A step in the right direction any way," answered her husband, as he tore the offending chapter to atoms before consigning it to oblivion. "You will be caught in the net yet!"

She shook her head.

"Oh! I'm too old to alter the opinions of a lifetime, but I must say those meetings at the Temple have given me very great pleasure. I used to be taken to church as a child, and I remember how dull the service was, and what long sermons our Rector used to preach. He never changed the tone of his voice, he was one of those heavy, long-winded, goody-goody people, and I hated him."

"Your views are those of the Bishop of Carlisle," said Mr. Hillingdon, "who remarked publicly that he adored goodness, but loathed 'goodness.' In addressing the Young Men's Christian Association he made an appeal for greater broad-mindedness, and warned his listeners not to place too much reliance on lectures, adding, 'the lecture was the most deceptive thing in the world, except a sermon.'"

"I wish he had been my father," sighed Mrs. Hillingdon. "I suffered from 'goody-goody' parents, as well as a narrow-minded Rector, who

would like to have condemned me to Hell for as little as sneezing in church. When he droned out the lessons, and concluded with the familiar words, 'here endeth the first lesson,' or 'here endeth the second lesson,' I used to think, as I looked at the sleepy faces round me, 'what lesson have these people learned?' I was sure half of them would not remember at lunch time one word of the beautiful literature they had heard. Despite my views, I always recognized the Bible was exquisitely written. Then again, after the prayers they all said 'Amen' quite mechanically, whether they listened or not. I never said 'Amen' unless I agreed to every word, and as I lost my faith, I grew silent."

She rose, stretching her brawny arms.

"I must leave this work till to-morrow. It's time I went to dress. You know we dine early."

"Are we going to the theatre?"

The forgetful husband tried to remember, as his wife regarded him with disapproval, shaking her grey head.

"It's the Torrey-Alexander night at the Temple," she vouchsafed. "You said you wished to go, so I applied for tickets."

"Of course, of course. I thought it was next week."

He hurried away, while Mrs. Hillingdon locked

her study door on the outside, for fear a disturbing hand might "tidy" the littered floor with its scattered galleys.

She wondered, as she replaced the flowing garment for an outdoor gown of shapeless build, how the public would receive her new novel. She had drawn her heroine from the dull drab of the lower middle class, in which there were no men and women, always "ladies and gentlemen." The correcting of proofs had tired her, for the realistic atmosphere of the book nauseated, and it was good to resort for an hour to the Temple of Art.

She found, as she had expected, a great contrast between the emotional force of Father Ignatius, and the downright almost blunt thoroughness of Dr. Torrey.

The American Revivalist attracted attention by the power of his earnestness and sincerity, while the magnetic conducting of Mr. Alexander delighted an audience unaccustomed to simple music, and the glad, "tune-y" refrains of Revival hymns.

Something in Dr. Torrey particularly caught the attention of Mrs. Hillingdon. She liked unconventional people, and she thought she might use him as a type of a religious fanatic in her next novel.

She listened therefore with increased interest

to his plain, straightforward, unaffected address, surprised he used so few gestures, and resorted to no theatrical effects.

He asked this fashionable meeting a simple question, "Where art thou?" "God," said Dr. Torrey, "asked this question of Adam after he had sinned, and the voice which had been sweet music to Adam up till then was different now, and Adam hid himself. There you have the history of every sinner trying to hide from the presence of God. Sceptics, infidels, agnostics, and atheists are all hiding from a holy God."

Mr. Hillingdon ventured a side glance at his wife, but her set tiger-like face gave no clue to the mind beneath, he failed to read her thoughts.

"If she would change, dear God!" he cried inwardly, "if she would change!"

"Adam didn't succeed in hiding from God," continued Dr. Torrey, "and no man ever will. Sooner or later each will have to come from his hiding place, and meet God face to face. Where art thou? Every intelligent person desires to know just where he is in the affairs of this world, how he stands socially, financially, and bodily. Don't be too proud to face the fact that you may be morally and spiritually bankrupt. Don't try

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to deceive yourselves, and above all, don't deceive others. It will do you no good to deceive others, and it is consummate folly to deceive yourself, and you cannot deceive God. Be honest with your fellow men, honest with yourself, honest with God. Face the facts, ask yourself the question, 'Where art thou?' and in answering remember the words of Jesus Himself, 'He that is not with Me is against Me.' So you see, you can't be neutral. Many of you who pass through life in ease and luxury may say, 'I am not against religion.' Don't deceive yourselves, if you are not with Christ, you are against Him. Now take those words of Christ away with you, and realize what you are doing. In your indifference you are against the Almighty, but if you are wise you will not let this awful indictment remain against you for another minute. Come out of that hiding place of indifference. Say, if you dare, 'I am against Christ,' but don't hide, don't be cowards. Where art thou? Answer this to your own conscience, answer it also with your mouth to some friend. Just say to some one when you leave this building, 'I am with Christ,' say it with pride. Don't let the fear of man seal your lips, and rob you of the joy these four words will

bring. Say them boldly from the heart, remembering that St. Paul said, 'with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Then when you hear that voice which so alarmed Adam saying, 'Where art thou?' your answer will be readily given without fear, 'I am with my Lord and my God.'"

Dr. Torrey did not stop there. He told his hearers that where they would spend eternity very likely depended upon to-night. He exhorted them to repentance and belief. He related the story of a young French nobleman who came to London, bringing a letter of introduction from Napoleon III, at that time Emperor, introducing him to Dr. Forbes Winslow. He was suffering from loss of sleep, and feared he would lose his reason, he had not had a good night's sleep for two years.

Again Mr. Hillingdon looked at his wife, her trouble had always been insomnia.

"On questioning the patient," Dr. Torrey continued, "Dr. Winslow received this confession, 'I am an infidel, yet in spite of the fact that I am an infidel, and my father was an infidel before me, every night when I lie down to sleep, I am confronted with the question, "Eternity, and where shall I spend it?"' All night the question rings in my ears: "Eternity, and where shall I spend it?"'

"Dr. Winslow replied he could do nothing for him, but walking across his study, he took a Bible from the shelf, and read aloud, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.'

"Then looking up at the Frenchman, he said, 'That is the only Physician that can help you.'"

Again Dr. Torrey asked his hearers, "Suppose you had a card to fill up, 'If I should die to-night, I would go to . . .' What would it be?"

He implored them to "get to the bottom of things," asking tremendous questions, telling anecdotes in a chatty vein, and never wearying his listeners, but using every method of sanctified ingenuity to win souls for Christ.

When the last gay chorus of a revival hymn had rung through the arches of the temple, Mrs. Hillingdon rose to go, without a word to her husband.

He helped her silently into her cloak, there was something new in the expression of her eyes.

At the door she met Arthur's mother who greeted her warmly.

Placing a great broad hand on Ethel Paris's arm, the wide tiger mouth broadened into a strangely harmonious smile, and Mrs. Hillingdon said boldly, "I am with Christ."

CHAPTER XXII

SHORTLY after the Torrey-Alexander night at Jane Cardigan's Temple, Mario and Mrs. Vincent were lunching together at the latter's house.

Mrs. Vincent had an eye for colour, and the scheme of her luncheon table pleased the artist. He was always happy in the presence of a pretty woman and dainty surroundings.

"I have been wondering," she said, leaning her elbows on the mahogany table, polished to reveal its reddest lights, "how you could possibly paint a face from memory as you painted Miss Cardigan."

"You see, Madame," murmured Mario, "the memory was pictured on my mind, I had only to transfer ——"

He paused, fixing his dreamy eyes on the Venetian "gold dust" glasses, and fingering the Carrickmacross lace of a white cambric doyley. Yellow roses, long stalked and pale, raised their heads in faint fragility from gold vases, while Madonna lilies, with stalks cut in graduated lengths, lay in sun-ray fashion on the table.

"It sounds so easy," said Mrs. Vincent, "but nobody really believes you, Monsieur Mario. They say she visited you before her death."

Mrs. Vincent looked hard at Mario. She was not a jealous woman, but a slight expression of reproach filled her eyes at the moment, as if to say :—

“ Lie to the world if you like, but at least speak the truth to me.”

“ People know much always of the affairs of their friends,” he replied, “ more than they know themselves.”

“ Nothing is ever concealed, we are always found out,” Mrs. Vincent answered him sweetly.

“ Take some more grapes.”

Mario's brow lowered.

“ You believe then all you are told—by these—these gossips ? ”

“ Dear Monsieur Mario, don't look so furious. I believe only the evidence of my own eyes. You give such a picture to the public, and ask it to swallow the pretty fairy tale that your brush has a wonderful memory. Perhaps it's a psychological brush, and looks beyond the grave. You must know, you must see—the face speaks, it's alive, but so near death as to be almost painful, a brave, bright face fighting the enemy, a face to turn men's hearts to God, a face worthy to reign in a Temple of worship. There, I won't question you further, I promise.”

“ Thank you, Madame.”

She paused, peeping up at him from under her lashes. Then she put out a long fingered hand, and touched his arm coaxingly.

"Still, I should like to know the truth," she whispered, showing a row of very white teeth under smiling lips. "I heard something so horrible."

The smile faded suddenly, and she put up her hands to her face.

"What did you hear?"

"Ah! You are curious now."

"Naturally."

"I heard," she whispered, "that Jane Cardigan died in your studio."

"It is untrue."

"That she died on the very sofa upon which you painted her for the Academy," continued Mrs. Vincent, not heeding the interruption, "and to avoid a scandal you and the chauffeur carried her into the motor, and spread the story now generally accepted."

"A scandal as empty as the mind which did invent it——"

"You are sure——"

"I swear by God!"

He pushed his chair from the table, and rose without ceremony.

"The hour is late, Madame, you must excuse me."

"Now I have offended you." She stood before him penitently, in an attitude of dejection. "I ought not to have told you."

"Ah, no, no, it is not that. But, you see, we are bound to resent all those stories when they concern people who are dear to us, especially when they try to injure the dead."

"The dead care so little."

"But the living care so much. You will be kind to contradict these little histories, which are an insult to the memory of that good woman."

"Good!"

The word only just escaped Mrs. Vincent's lips in a half whisper, accompanied by the raising of her eyebrows.

"Who has dared to say otherwise? She never spoke an evil or untrue word. She had a smile for all, and Heaven only knows the good she did with that smile. People with sad hearts, forbidding looks, or nerves exhausted, found mental rejuvenation in the face of Miss Cardigan, when she smiled upon them. Those who flew to sunny climes to find new life in 'smiling nature,' might have saved themselves a journey had they met her."

"It's a pretty idea," said Mrs. Vincent. "Why

don't you start a 'smile cure'? It might be very good for the digestion."

"It is not understood in England, the power of a smile which the eyes share with the lips, which gives a glow of pleasure, not in mere artificial contortion of the muscles. In the past, all Englishmen noticed at the famous French salons the smile of the hostess. In England, it is the last thing which impresses itself on a newcomer."

"So Jane Cardigan was to be forgiven everything because of her smile?"

"For that and for so much more it would take me a year to tell."

He held out his hand.

"Another little cigarette before you go," she urged, refusing his hand, and settling herself in a cozy corner, among tall flowering-plants and embroidered cushions.

"We lunched so late, it is nearly four o'clock, I pray you, excuse me."

"Where are you going?"

"To the house of Madame Hillingdon. She invited me to call for the first time to-day. I could not be so rude as to neglect the invitation."

"But you know you don't like ugly women."

"When brains sit behind, I do not mind the

height of the forehead, or the shape of the nose. She leaves her mark on the world, that is enough for me. I am to paint her at the request of Monsieur Hillingdon. He is so proud of his wife."

"She will make a terrifying picture. I hope you'll paint her seated at a desk with her feet on a tiger-skin rug. The face of the tiger and the face of the woman would suggest an affinity which might prove infinitely attractive to lovers of the weird."

"I saw her the other night coming out of the Temple with Mrs. Paris, and she did not look at all like a tiger then. She had rather the expression of a lamb, *très douce*."

"Don't you know? She's changed her views. It's a positive mercy she has given up those horrid atheistic theories."

"A convert," he said slowly, "Arthur Paris works not in vain. He has caught many fish in the net, and he will catch more. They fly perhaps from sleepy dogmas, from teaching which fails to satisfy, and hearing it is the fashion to see that Temple, they go, they meet the great mind, they are enchanted with the beauty, the reverence, the atmosphere, and then, ah! Madame, do not smile at what I say, the good God Himself does the rest."

Mrs. Vincent parted from Mario with a sigh of

regret. She would like to have kept him all the afternoon.

"He is going to the Hillingdons' on business," she said, "but he comes to me for pleasure."

Mrs. Hillingdon had certainly changed, there was something different in her face. She was talking earnestly to Bloom Elphinstone as Mario entered, while her husband appeared to be boring Harold Stone with photographs he had taken of foreign places.

The artist warmly congratulated the engaged couple, in the pretty flowery way so difficult to English tongues.

"You will be married soon?" he asked, amused and yet touched at the sight of their radiant faces.

"Yes," replied Bloom, "before my father goes abroad again, and then we start almost immediately for Australia."

"That will be a loss for London, Mademoiselle, what shall we do without you?"

"I don't think London will miss us," laughed the girl light-heartedly, "but where we're going it really seems we are wanted a little, from the letters Harold has shown me. He mustn't stay away a day longer than he can help."

"Already, you see, you have your orders," said

Mario, jokingly to Harold Stone. "But it is well. The gentle authority you find is very sweet."

The tall Colonial shot a quick glance of love in Bloom's direction. His happiness was easily interpreted, and the expression on his face made Mario forget his past annoyance at Mrs. Vincent's. It seemed a bitter and cruel thing that the sacrifice he made in giving his beloved picture to Jane Cardigan's Temple, should have roused the talk of idle people. Mrs. Vincent little dreamed the wound she implanted by her thoughtless repetition of unguarded sayings.

"I hope I may be present at your wedding," said the artist.

"We shall be so pleased if you will come," replied Bloom, with a genuine flush of pleasure, for she respected his genius, and was by no means blind to his celebrity. "But our wedding is to be very quiet, no fashionable pageant. I don't like the modern wedding, and my poor grandmother is almost in tears, because we have decided to be married without any show."

"For you it is better, you are not of the world, my dear Mademoiselle, we must leave the pageant for the butterflies and the peacocks. I go always to the church when my friends marry, that I may

say a prayer for them, but to the so-called 'reception,' the struggle to see your own present with five thousand others, I leave that to the more physically strong."

"Your turn should come next," declared Harold. "We were only counting up last night all the unmarried men who ought to think seriously of settling down. You and Sir William Lambdon headed the list."

Just for a moment a mystical expression crept into Mario's eyes, giving them almost the look of tears. This man, who could enter heart and soul into the spirit of the moment, and share the pleasures of others with the light-heartedness of a boy, showed suddenly the hidden tragedy behind his smile, the something in his life which Jane Cardigan had taken away with her, never to give back in this life, but to bind up perchance in a life to come.

"Marriage is not for me," he said, addressing himself to Harold Stone, while the others talked of less serious matters, "I am only for a memory, I cannot escape."

The man who had loved Jane Cardigan and now loved another, looked at the man who would never love again. There was something in Harold Stone's face which bespoke a mind startled sud-

denly into realization. Was it possible this gay, artistic, pleasure-seeking foreigner, who wore his laurels so lightly, had, after all, loved more deeply?

The mere suggestion hurt Harold Stone, and the past rushed back in a flood of painful recollection, with all its young joy, and subsequent heart burnings. He seemed to see Jane at that moment, just as she appeared when first they met, and to hear her merry voice, with its oddly tuneful note, telling him gaily that she was called "the wicked Aunt."

What an innocent face it had been, with its wide, childish eyes and laughing lips, the colour coming and going in her cheeks. He caught, across that year of death, the flash of one of her splendid smiles, the complex prettiness of a tender yet willful mouth, all the enigmatical charm and mystery of Jane, and with it the distasteful old story of the boy who shot himself in Cairo. From the very first, then, she charmed the minds of men, a mischievous witch, a dare-devil, laughter-loving "wicked Aunt," a capricious, tormenting, elusive, maddening personality, a soft, radiant, sympathetic, tender, almost passionate Jane.

Bloom spoke, and Harold did not hear. Mario guessed the reason, and, drawing his attention to his *fiancée*, roused him as from a reverie. His mind had wandered back to the "forget-me-not" dinner.

CHAPTER XXIII

NO one noticed Harold Stone's sudden pre-occupation during his visit to Mrs. Hillingdon, save Mario, who looked deeply, and read the cause. The sharp intuition of the artist knew instinctively that scenes from the long ago were rising to confront the Colonial on the brink of his new life. It might only last a moment, that mirage of the past, while the full, bright present waited, suspended during a brief interval of pain. The moment held Jane as a hostess, sparkling, witty, infectiously bright, drawing the best out of people. Jane as a beautiful mountain whose height might never be scaled. Jane as a friend, wishing him "bon voyage" on his lonely journey to Australia.

Bloom Elphinstone would make the better wife. She would crown his days with joy and peace, she would draw from his heart all the love of his strong man's nature. As the queen of his home, as the mother of his children, she would reign with all the glory of unsullied womanhood.

"It's quite refreshing to see that happy couple,"

said Mrs. Hillingdon, pouring out a cup of tea for Mario. "Sugar?"

"Five lumps, if you please."

"I have been thinking how I can possibly find time to sit for my picture, with all the work I have on hand. Still, it must be managed somehow, to please my husband."

A softer expression made the rugged face of the tiger-woman quite attractive at that moment.

"Madame," said Mario, "it is the very busy who manage all things, only the half busy have no time to spare for the many claims of life. With your power of observation, you must have discovered this."

"Quite true. Perhaps that is the reason I am not only going to sit for my portrait, but intend undertaking a very big work. All the great Revivals in history have resulted in the formation of some community or society. Now, I consider Arthur's work is distinctly great, it has made a new woman of me, and the effect of its teaching, the power of its influence, is being felt very strongly throughout Society. One change, I notice, which is the distinct result of his services, lies in the fact that people no longer appear ashamed of talking of their religion. I used to

wonder why they hid it up so, as if it were a kind of bogey, to be let out on Sunday, when they went conventionally to church, only to grumble at the length of the sermon, the heat of the building, or the discomfort of the seats. Very likely they had been singing, 'We love the place, O God,' or something equally at variance with their true state of mind."

"And the big work you will commence, may I ask what it is?" queried Mario.

"It would take too long to tell you the details, but I am going to form a society which will carry on and strengthen the work of the Revival. I am sufficiently ambitious to believe some day, long after we have all passed from the scene, it may live for good, and be as far spread as the society of 'Freemasons,' which is such a charitable and excellent institution, so far as I know. All this may seem strange to you, but I was an atheist, and now I believe. Such a change cannot come to a life without showing fruit."

She spoke in such a natural unaffected way that Mario was charmed. He felt her intelligence, and almost admired the rugged face by reason of its character and strength of purpose.

"I congratulate you, Madame, on the change.

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Only yesterday I was reading a book of yours, in which you ridiculed belief in the Gospel miracles. You considered the enlightened ideas of the twentieth century should scorn the turning of water into wine, the elasticity of loaves and fishes, the 'take up thy bed and walk,' the healing touch, the casting out of devils, and the raising of the dead."

"I have stopped the circulation of the book," she answered simply. "To-day we have miracles on all sides, the discovery of 'Argon' and 'Radium,' the 'Roentgen,' 'X,' 'N' and other rays, the submarines, and the atmospheric victory attained by compressed air. The commonplaces of to-day are the miracles of yesterday, the antiquities of to-morrow. I am going to try, like a great character in the Bible, to live solely for the faith I once tried to destroy."

"And this," Mario was saying to himself, "through Jane's last wish, Jane's dying prayer."

Undoubtedly Mrs. Hillingdon realized now her responsibility to God, and intended using for good the powers God had given her.

"Mrs. Paris," she said, turning the subject, "is anxious Arthur should go away for a rest, she thinks it quite unnatural for a young man

to be given up body and soul to one mission, one object, one thought. He seems perfectly well, and happier than he has ever been in his life. Of course, she's really very proud of him. She thinks he has some of Jane's characteristics, without her frivolity. A power over others, a charm of manner, a natural disinclination to link his life with a kindred spirit. His mother feels sure he will never marry. His heart is in Heaven, with God, and perhaps a little with that strange, incomprehensible character, Jane Cardigan. They were all in all to each other, those two. She influenced him more than she influenced her lovers. He was to her a child and a brother, and by her death, she made a man of him. No one can say she lived in vain, that wild, reckless will-o'-the-wisp of a creature."

"More than her lovers," mused Mairo, when he left the Hillingdons, "I wonder!"

CHAPTER XXIV

QUITE a sensation had been caused at the Temple of Art one Friday evening, when the congregation missed the celebrated picture by Mario of the late Jane Cardigan.

Enquiries were made of the footmen who attended the doors, but they could give no information on the subject.

A rumour went round that the painting had been stolen, and possibly to avoid a scandal, Arthur Paris gave orders that secrecy be maintained.

"I think it's a good thing," the Duchess of Darrell declared, who regularly attended the Temple meetings. "It was a most unsuitable picture for a religious building, and always upset my poor boy. He used to sit and gaze at it, with such a stupid look on his face, I felt quite vexed."

The little Countess, who also returned at intervals to the elevating influence of the Revival, whispered it was quite possible the Duchess had bribed a burglar to remove the painting, in order to spare the young Duke's feelings. Another hinted he had bought it privately from Arthur at an enormous sum, for one of his many residences in the country.

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Several critics expressed satisfaction at its removal. Some considered it incongruous, others termed it "painful and disturbing," while not a few condemned its introduction to the Temple as a violation of sanctity, an error of judgment, a lapse of good taste.

Mario was out of town and returned late, so heard nothing of the picture's mysterious flight. He came home tired after a long journey. It was close upon one o'clock when he entered his house with a key. His man servant had waited up for him, a proceeding which always rather disturbed the artist, who preached early hours to others, seldom retiring himself till three in the morning.

"You can go to bed," he said, "I'll put out the lights later."

He went into his study, and sat down to write letters.

The man hesitated in the doorway.

"Mr. Paris called this afternoon, sir," he said, "and waited some time. I thought perhaps you might return."

"Did he leave a message?"

"Yes, sir. He hoped you would take luncheon with him to-morrow."

The man seemed half inclined to vouchsafe some

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further information, but hesitated and withdrew.

Mario inspected a pile of unanswered letters, yawned over them, and wrote quickly. Many were invitations which might have been left to a secretary, but the artist felt he owed his friends the courtesy of his own handwriting. He also replied to several requests for his autograph from impressionable young women, who waxed enthusiastic over his work.

He left nothing neglected, not classing himself with the "half busy," who fail in the small amenities of life.

The dawn was creeping to the window when he switched off the electric light, and went slowly up-stairs, conscious of physical and mental fatigue. He hardly knew why, but a strange unusual depression hung over him. Probably the pale dawn, with its mysterious chill, even on a summer morning, made his thoughts grey. Later the roseate hues would fall, the birds awake, and the sunbeams filter down to earth, as yet the world lay in shadow, without the fire of its awakening.

He turned up the lights mechanically as he entered his room. The thought of sleep was welcome. He stood by the door arrested suddenly by an unusual sight, catching his breath with a

gasp of surprise. In a moment it seemed as if all the blood in his body mounted to his head. He went forward with outstretched arms.

At the foot of his bed, poised as of yore on a gold easel, the painting of Jane Cardigan stood surrounded by flowers. Once again a wreath of crimson roses crowned the head, placed there by loving hands, and attached to the frame a note in Arthur's writing, addressed to Mario.

The artist tore it open nervously, he was trembling from hand to foot with the emotion of the moment.

"I hope," ran the letter, "you won't misunderstand, or think for one moment I am ungrateful for the gift I now return. I only give back what is yours, knowing this picture, which is part of your life, will be best in your keeping. The criticism of the world is at times a trial and a curse. The portrait has caused endless comment, which may have reached your ears, and you, I know, will be the first to resent any slur on Jane's memory. I am sure it would be her wish that you should keep your own. I return it in her name, with my warmest thanks for your generosity in giving up your treasure. Yours in all sincerity,—A. PARIS."

An expression of such intense pleasure and relief radiated Mario's face, he hardly seemed the

same man who a moment since toiled laboriously up the quaint winding stair. His eyes sparkled, his lips parted in a welcoming smile, he flushed with the bewildering ecstasy of an unexpected joy.

Never till this early hour of dawn, when he stood before the speaking likeness, had he fully realized all it cost him to part with the picture, or how bitterly he missed it from his room.

Silently he blessed Arthur for the return of the gift, noting his kind thought of the blooming flowers by the easel, the rose crown, sweetly scented, passionate and fair, dying in beauty upon the altar of memory.

So long he stood in rapture, basking before the liquid eyes, the tender smile, the invitation of the pictured face, that presently golden tipped shadows stole through the window, and waking birds piped a carol.

Morning was upon the world at last, in the bold assertion of eternal youth and daily resurrection, morning, which laughed and wept tears over a besmirched city. Morning dwelt also in Mario's heart.

He bent to the canvas, as he had done when parting from the face which held the world for him. Once again his lips reverently touched the image of his love.

"*Baiser*," he whispered, "*le mot est doux*."

CHAPTER XXV

ARTHUR also returned late to his rooms on that Friday night when the picture had been missed from the Temple.

Sir William Lambdon, who had supped with him after the service, stayed talking and smoking, a cheerful companion as ever. Before he left he spoke of Jane.

"So you've given her portrait back to Mario, and don't want it known? You can trust me not to repeat. After all, it's nobody's business, the very reason every one will try to trace the picture."

"I do not think they will succeed," said Arthur.

"How do you know Mario won't exhibit it, or even sell it in time?"

Arthur smiled.

"I think I can answer for that, though I misjudged the man for years. You either know him very well, or not at all. Oddly enough the people to whom the real Mario is a stranger, think they know him best. I took the picture back myself. He was out, so I left it in his room, just where I first saw it. His servant seemed rather surprised."

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"I shall miss it from the Temple," said Sir William, rising to go. "It was a work of genius, but I think you were right, it was better away."

Arthur stood at the top of the stairs watching his friend's departure. Then he reentered the comfortable sitting-room, and threw himself down in an armchair by a table littered with books. One hand lay upon a volume as if to open it, but Arthur's thoughts strayed back to his evening in Jane's Temple.

The music that night had been exceptionally brilliant. The latest singer from Australia had given an exquisite solo, her voice being heard for the first time in London at the now celebrated Temple of Art.

An eminent divine preached on the words, "Son, remember."

"Well might they remember with remorse," he said, "as the long procession passed of the hungry they failed to feed, the naked they did not clothe, or the sick they left unvisited. The only thing which could give satisfaction now or hereafter was to know the world was better for their having been in it."

"If the Temple had done good," thought Arthur, "the world was better for Jane's exist-

ence, since she suggested, aye, demanded the work."

He had been given the privilege of fulfilling her request, of carrying out her last wishes, but she was the real cause, the true founder of the Revival.

He leaned his head back on the high oak carving of the armchair. His eyes roved dreamily round the room.

Perhaps it was true he needed a change, though the spirit, full of willing service, forgot at times the flesh was weak. To-night, however, the man's vitality cried for rest to the strained and anxious nerves.

There was an ache at his forehead, a feeling of lassitude, he believed thunder must be in the air. He felt too tired to go to bed.

Such a mood often brings to the mind a mental review, a "What-have-I-done?" "What-am-I-worth?" attitude, the mood which in a religious man raises the prayer, "Show me Thyself."

Only a year ago Arthur had been without God in the world, to-day his whole life was set upon drawing men and women to respect, to reverence, to consider, to love holier things.

He saw quite clearly now the working of an

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Almighty Hand in what had appeared the cruel tragedy of his past.

He opened a book and read a few sentences.

"In many lives" (his eyes fell on the words), "there comes a deep sorrow; we are overwhelmed by a great perplexity, engulfed by some crushing bereavement. It is then, in the darkness, Christ's face becomes clear to us, we see Him as our only hope and strength. And in that faith we attempt and we achieve the touch of faith."

Arthur thought of the Divine face in his vision, the face of the Saviour, with all its humanity of suffering, of hungering love, of tender forgiveness. Such a revelation would never come again. The lesson had been taught, the Temple had been built, the work started.

That purely pleasure-loving set which Jane knew so well, now gave up some time, some social engagements, to hear the Word, to revive a practically dead spiritual life.

To those in pain, sorrow, bereavement, the face of "Christus Consolator" grows ever clearer in the shadow, but Jane's Temple attracted the gay, the healthy, the happy. That the Redeemer of the world might be less neglected, Arthur

strove and laboured, always with Jane's words in his ears, "I was too rich to be saved."

Arthur kept in his rooms a great box of letters, all referring to the Revival. Letters of thanks, letters of praise, suggestions, criticisms, acknowledgments of faith renewed, of dead hearts raised, of shallow lives made deeper, of souls refreshed.

From one Society woman the frank, characteristic acknowledgment came :—

"I had not prayed for years. I had not listened to a sermon since I married, and the opening day of your Temple was the eighth anniversary of our wedding. I took my husband to the 'Arthur Paris Revival' simply because it was the thing to do. Every one was curious, every one was going. That night I realized what a power preaching may be, messages from God in the hushed silence. The atmosphere and beauty, the original charm of the place attracted me. I came again and again. If I were a Salvationist I should stand up and say I was saved, instead I remain seated in public, but at home—I kneel in prayer."

This simple confession had given Arthur a thrill of infinite joy and gratitude, coming from a woman who once openly ridiculed religion. Only the previous "Good Friday," he remembered her

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look of half amused, half satirical surprise, when on pressing him for the reason why he could not attend a luncheon party at her house, he told her he was going to a three hours' service.

"You poor soul! I hope it won't put you in a bad temper," she had replied. "What quaint things these functions are."

Strange what small incidents drifted to-night through Arthur's mind. Scraps of bygone conversations, faces and scenes, triumphs and failures.

The book slipped from his hands, he stooped to pick it up, when the sound of a light step outside arrested him.

"Come in," he murmured, noticing a movement of the door handle.

No voice replied, the door remained closed. He watched it curiously. Though he saw nothing, he still had the feeling some one had entered the dimly-lighted room. He waited expectantly, no sense of fear quickening the even beat of his pulses. Then suddenly his heart seemed to stand still, and a look such as Mario had worn, of pent up rapture broke on his face, as a ray of sunshine.

"Jane," he whispered, "Jane."

"Yes, Arthur."

The words came quite simply, in the soft,

musical tones he knew so well. He turned his head and sat upright.

On the opposite side of the table, with only a few books lying between them, he saw Jane. She was looking straight into his eyes, her face full of its old eloquence and spirit, but with a fresh meaning, a new light.

It seemed perfectly natural she should be there, Arthur only felt conscious of intense satisfaction, supreme relief.

"I'm so glad you've come," he murmured, "I have so much to say to you."

"About the Temple?" she queried.

"Yes, about the Temple. Has it been merely the success of sensationalism, or is it really doing a great work?"

"It is helping Society not to be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," she answered. "You remember the Bishop of London's sermon on the opening day, when he lamented the existence of this shame? In removing this reproach, it has done a work which may truly be called great."

She smiled, a tender refreshing smile. Her face looked transparent in its loveliness. Arthur rested his eyes upon her without moving.

"You are tired," she continued, in that unex-

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pected little maternal way she only occasionally used before him. "Ethel is right, you should husband your strength. There is so much work before you yet. You're merely on the verge of your career. It's quite—quite the beginning. I wish I could help you."

"But you can, you do. Every day, every hour. That night at the Savoy ——"

"Ah! you remember."

He caught his breath and clutched the table, swaying forward to see more clearly just where the light fell upon her profile.

Did she think it possible he could forget?

"Your mission is doing something more," she continued, "besides teaching people not to be ashamed of their religion. It's showing them that it's possible to be good and devout Christians without drawing long faces, and attempting to look sanctimonious. You have not changed outwardly, Arthur, but you know you're a different man. I loved you as you were, but I love you better as you are. Now you're redeeming my life, and I am grateful with all my soul."

The yearning affection in her voice fell softly on his ears. For a moment he could only see her faintly through a mist of tears. She seated her-

self at the table which parted them by a few inches, and he pushed the books aside, that he might gaze at her more fully.

"I wish you would come often," he said, "and talk to me like this. I've wanted you so long, yet I never expected you to-night. I used to think I should see you in the Temple, especially when I stood before your portrait."

"Yes, I know, but you were right to give it back to Mario. He will be very pleased. I was so tired when I sat to him that day, but nothing tires me now."

Shespoke lightly, and laughed a little, the laugh of the wind when it plays through the trees, or tosses the sea foam at low tide, while the waves are young.

"You must never feel alone, Arthur, because—remember this—you are always surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. I'm nothing, but they can guard you, strengthen you. If some one had told me how near we were to the angels, I should have spent my time differently, I should have listened for their voices. I heard them that last day we were together in the car, I wanted to tell you, but I hadn't the power. It is good news about Mrs. Hillingdon. She is one of the lost sheep brought

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back, and is more precious than the ninety and nine. There will be many such, only keep up your courage and fear nothing. Teach men and women that death is only the slave which takes off their working dress, it cannot rob them of life. You have the responsibility upon you of all the souls I might have helped, you are paying my debts, you must not shirk."

Her voice grew stronger, her eyes glowed brighter, he could see the flashing of her white teeth.

He bowed to her commands.

"So be it!" The words came faintly, his lips felt dry and hard, but the forehead he bent upon his hand was damp. He could hear the ticking of the clock making a duet with the throb of his pulses.

"You must work to save these people who are coming daily under the influence of the mission, to save them from terrible passions, from the tyranny of their evil natures, to help them in their fight with the devil," she insisted, clasping her white hands supplicatingly, while her eager, anxious words drove home.

"I won't shirk," he said, raising his head, "I promise you, Jane,"

"If you knew how short the longest life appears when your eyes are opened," she sighed, "but I cannot explain. We're together, you see, and not together, Arthur, do you understand?"

"Yes. But why, oh! why?"

"By the will of One," she whispered, "who is ever ruling, directing, guiding, 'Whose never-failing Providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth.' You cannot comprehend the mystery, poor child; nor see how every action, every thought, leads on towards a far-off purpose. Discipline is a work of love, and service of favour. You have been greatly blessed. Do not forget to be thankful."

Once again she smiled upon him, an infinitely sweet, familiar, human smile, which seemed to draw her spirit nearer and contradict the words, they were together and not together.

Suddenly his whole being craved for the lost touch, the severed union. He would take her, hold her, keep her, feel again the tender warmth of her cheek, the dear clasp of her hands. How was it possible he had kept aloof all this while, with only his eyes upon her, when she was so near—so near?

He rose with trembling arms outstretched,

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"Jane," he cried, "come to me, come to me!"

But she drifted back, warding him off.

"Then let me come to you," he implored, staggering towards her through the gloom.

"Not yet," she answered faintly, and he could see her eyes upon him with a wonderful expression of love, "not JUST yet!"

With a cry Arthur Paris awoke.

He was seated in the high backed oak chair, with a book lying at his feet.

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